

COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING MARRIAGES

"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19:6).

God designed marriage to glorify Himself and to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). Therefore, He established marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society.

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus. We want all of you to know that you are welcome at Calvary Memorial Church.

Because Calvary Memorial Church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages and discouraging divorce.

We require and provide thorough premarital counseling for all couples seeking marriage at CMC. The purpose is to ensure that two believers enter into Christian marriage advisedly and are well prepared for its many challenges.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by actively participating in fellowship through which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Heb. 10:24-25).

We also expect husbands to encourage one another to love, cherish, and spiritually lead their wives; and wives to encourage one another to respect and lovingly submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

Our leaders are committed to providing counsel and support to couples who face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that, instead, can be resolved through Spirit-guided counseling, repentance, forgiveness, and ongoing discipleship.

It is the Elders' biblical conviction that there are times when God permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. We believe divorce is permissible when a spouse has been sexually involved with a person outside the marriage and remains unrepentant (Matt. 5:31-32), or when an unbelieving spouse abandons a marriage (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Even though divorce is *permissible* in these situations, it is not *required* – nor is it necessarily wise or beneficial. God hates divorce (Mal 2:14-16). God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to Him (Ps. 103:8-12; Isa. 55:7). When divorce becomes an option, an offended spouse can imitate God's love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace (Eph. 4:32-5:2). This may involve patiently bearing neglect or lovingly confronting serious sin (Col. 3:12-14; Gal. 6:1). In some situations, love may require asking the church to initiate formal redemptive discipline to rescue a spouse and a marriage from the devastating effects of unrepentant sin (Matt. 18:12-20).

When someone is considering divorce, he or she is encouraged to bring the situation to our leaders and cooperate with them as they determine whether grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate.

Separated spouses who have filed for divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court issues a divorce decree. Thus they should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with the scriptural mandates for marriage.

We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate.

The leadership of Calvary Memorial Church will support a decision to remarry only if we determine every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

God offers love, grace, and comfort to every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does Calvary Memorial Church. God also graciously offers His love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves Him (and us) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done all they can to rebuild broken relationships.