

Lake Pointe Bible Church  
**Position Paper on Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage**  
**(9.26.11)**

**A. Marriage is from God, not man**

At creation God established marriage and called it "good." As such, marriage is under the authority of God's written Word, the Bible, and not the current practices of society.

God ordained marriage for the following ends:

1. The Glory of God. Marriage exists first and foremost to glorify God. Human beings individually are image bearers of God (Genesis 1:26), but man and woman in marriage display His glory in a distinctive way (vv. 27-28). Marriage glorifies God as creator; Beyond that, marriage glorifies God as redeemer, for Christian marriage is an illustration of the redeeming grace of God in Christ (Eph. 5:22-33). To the degree that Christians live out this pattern of God's love through His grace in Christ, they witness to one another, their children, the church and the world the gospel of God's redeeming love in Christ.

2. Companionship. In Gen. 2:18 God said "it is not good for a man to be alone." So God called men and women to promote mutual care and friendship within their marriage relationship.

3. Mutual Assistance. Gen. 2:18 adds "I will make a helper suitable for him," reminding us that we are to be a help to one another in the marriage relationship. Also, each husband is told to love his wife as Christ loved the church and "gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

4. The Bearing, Nurturing & Training of Children. Genesis 1:28, Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and Ephesians 6:4 teach that the marriage relationship is also for procreation and moral teaching of children.

5. Promoting the Stability of Society. The family is presented in Scripture as the foundational institution of society. When marriage, the foundational human relationship, is degraded, the family unit disintegrates and the fabric of any nation unravels (cf. Genesis 2).

6. The Proper Context of Human Sexuality. Hebrews 13:4 teaches that sexual intimacy should be reserved for a man and a woman within the covenant of marriage. A marriage should remain pure in thought and practice. The 7th commandment prohibits adultery (Exodus 20:14). Jesus sets an even higher standard in his statement: "...*anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery*" (Matthew 5:27-28). Sexual relations outside of marriage are forbidden by Scripture (1 Cor. 6:16-20, 1 Thess. 4:3-4). The Apostle Paul specifically commands believers to "abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3). Infidelity brings tragic consequences. Thus, the author of Hebrews solemnly warns that "God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4). The modern axiom that "everyone is doing it, so it must be okay" is condemned by Biblical teaching. Emotional unfaithfulness to one's spouse is equally sinful and hence, destructive to the marriage relationship. In order to strengthen their covenant relationship, couples should seek godly and practical ways to enrich their relationship through marriage retreats, couples seminars or classes and pastoral counsel.

**B. Marriage is between one man & one woman**

From Genesis to Revelation, sexual union in marriage is said to be between a man and a woman. Scripture emphatically condemns same-sex unions and sexual intercourse between people of the same gender. In the Old Testament a homosexual relationship was a capital offense, and in the New Testament it is repeatedly condemned (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:24-27, 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

### **C. God has established roles within marriage and the family**

Ephesians 5:22-24 teaches the role of the husband and wife, *“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”*

God has appointed the husband to lovingly lead the family, and wives are to respect and follow the leadership of their husbands. The husband is to love his wife “even as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:22-26). In such a marriage bond, husbands and wives seek together God’s guidance in family decisions, in the nurturing and training of their children in spiritual faith and in all aspects of the well-being of their family and as a witness to the grace of God in their life together. This relationship between the man and the woman in marriage is similar to the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity, where Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal in essence, power and glory, but with different functional roles.

All forms of emotional and physical abuse violate the one-flesh covenantal relationship. We urge abused persons to consider their own safety and that of family members first and to seek help from the church and, as necessary, professional and legal resources, to bring healing to the individuals and to the marriage relationship.

### **D. Marriage is to be permanent**

From the beginning of creation, God established marriage as a permanent covenant. Genesis 2:24 teaches that the husband and wife are “one flesh,” and Jesus said, “What God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6). Marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman and between the participants and God (Malachi 2:14-16). It is therefore more than a temporary agreement of convenience, a contract or a well-intentioned promise. As a binding relationship, the marriage covenant is solemnly sealed by a ceremony witnessed by family and friends and regulated by the state. The present practices of sex before marriage, living together outside of marriage, same-sex unions and the disintegration of marriages are all contrary to God’s design.

In marriage, a man and woman leave their families of origin and a new family unit is formed (Genesis 2:24). Marriage involves leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Given the complexities and challenges inherent in the merging of two lives into one, at Lake Pointe we require pastoral counseling or classes prior to the marriage ceremony.

### **E. A Christian is only to marry another Christian.**

While marriage is a “creation ordinance,” open to all people, the Scriptures teach that a believer in Jesus Christ is only to become “one flesh” with another committed believer. (I Cor. 7:39, II Cor. 6:14).

### **F. Marriage is not for everyone**

While marriage is a great blessing, it is not God's will that all should be married. Singleness in Scripture is also a great blessing and offers unique opportunities for an undivided devotion to the Lord. Matthew 19:12 describes people who have chosen to remain single for the sake of the Kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 7:25-35 describes reasons for choosing to remain single in light of present difficulties which lead to additional concerns in this present life. Singleness should not be seen as second rate, but as a valid alternative that has certain advantages in serving the Lord. Some people possess what Paul called “the gift of celibacy” (1 Corinthians 7:6). Those whom God has called to be single for His sake should be honored in the church.

### **G. Divorce is discouraged but allowed in certain circumstances**

Marriage is a covenant, an oath (Proverbs 2:17; Malachi 2:14), and covenants are designed to be kept (Numbers 30:2; Ecclesiastes 5:4-6). God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) and so should we. Marriage was intended by God to be for as long as both people are alive (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39). Therefore, we never encourage divorce.

We believe that the Bible teaches:

--Both Jesus and Paul condemned divorce without valid grounds and discouraged divorce even for valid grounds (Matthew 19, I Corinthians 7).

--Both Jesus and Paul affirmed the Old Testament grounds for divorce (Mark 10:2-9, I Corinthians 7:10-11).

--The Old Testament allowed divorce for adultery, neglect or abuse. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Exodus 21:10-11). We understand that other churches have taken the position that adultery is the only Biblical grounds for divorce. However, we believe that these passages teach that certain occurrences of neglect or abuse also broke the marriage covenant.

--Both Jesus and Paul condemned remarriage after an invalid divorce but not after a valid divorce. (Matthew 19: 9, I Corinthians 7:15).

### **H. Remarriage is allowed when the divorce was valid**

It is sometimes claimed that the Bible allows divorce in certain cases, but not remarriage. However, both Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:15 teach that when the divorce was for a valid reason, remarriage is not a sin.

### **I. Today's cultural realities require grace.**

Often, by the time people come to the Lord or come into the church, mistakes have already been made. These will quite often require honesty and repentance before the Lord, and at times to other individuals. If a divorce occurred for invalid reasons but the individuals have not remarried, a person or couple may need to pursue reconciliation. If an invalid divorce was followed by an invalid remarriage, we advise confession of one's mistakes, but staying in the current marriage and working to build the marriage for God's glory. God is a God of grace, forgiveness, and restoration, and these are available even in the case of past sin.