

## POLICY POSITION ON MARRIAGE

### Overview on Marriage

- ▶ Marriage was created by God and He intended it to be a lifetime relationship between one man and one woman.
- ▶ God created marriage for the purpose of couples bringing glory to God as one flesh, parenting godly children, and enjoying sexual pleasure.
- ▶ Because of the nature of marriage and the nature of the Christian life, a believer should not enter into marriage with an unbeliever.
- ▶ Marriage is a sacred institution in which men and women can experience the deepest sense of spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy.

### See the following scriptures:

- Genesis 2:18-25
- Matthew 19:4-6
- Deuteronomy 7:3-4
- Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1
- Ephesians 5:30-32
- Song of Solomon
- Proverbs 27:17
- Romans 1:26 - 27, 8:29

### Divorce

The Bible says that the institution of marriage was created by God (Genesis 2:21-25) as part of the whole creation. Therefore we believe God's Word is our source of authority for defining marriage and setting the boundaries for marriage relationships. The Bible says that God intends for marriage to be a monogamous, life-long, loving relationship between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6; Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is the highest of all human relationships, provided by God as the best environment for relational intimacy (Genesis 2:18 & 25) and child rearing (Genesis 1:27-28). The love between a husband and a wife is to be an illustration of the love and faithfulness of God and his people (Malachi 2:13-16; Ephesians 5:22-33).

God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), but because of the influence of sin in the world (Jesus called it "the hardness of your hearts" in Matthew 19:8), the Bible makes concession for divorce. Divorce is allowable in the case of marital (sexual) unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:9) because the marriage covenant has been broken, but this is a concession and not a command. God still hates divorce, and if at all possible, if the unfaithful spouse shows signs of repentance and a willingness to recommit, we encourage the innocent party to seek forgiveness and restoration.

The Bible does make a distinction between physical separation and divorce (I Corinthians 7:5), so we would counsel people in certain difficult situations that physical separation may be warranted until a godly counselor advises otherwise.

We counsel those who recognize they were remarried outside of the biblical boundaries to repent and remain faithful to the one whom they are currently married (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). The grace of Christ can be extended to those who have been divorced for unbiblical reasons. Those who have made wrong decisions in the past cannot undo their mistakes, but must be faithful to Christ in the situation in which they currently find themselves.

Questions often arise as to whether a person who has been divorced is eligible for a leadership position at MCCC. Because the Scripture says that an elder must be “the husband of but one wife” (I Timothy 3:2 – literally a “one-woman man”), some contend that a person desiring to be an elder or pastor in the church must not have been divorced. It is our position that a divorce in a person’s past does not automatically exclude him from future church leadership. The nature and circumstances of the offense and the length of time of proven credibility are all taken into account in determining whether a person is qualified for a leadership position. The same should apply to a person’s past divorce.

We have instituted several policies and practices to help protect the members of our church from the trauma of divorce and to hold high the ideals of biblical marriage and sexual purity. We require pre-marital counseling before couples can get married at our church. We frequently preach about marriage and we provide various resources to church attendees. We confront and counsel those whom we know are unfaithful to their spouses. Any person in a leadership position at MCCC who is undergoing separation or divorce, whether innocent or not, is asked to step aside from his or her position of authority for a period of time so that full attention can be given to the crisis at hand so that nothing will hinder the ministry of the church.

According to Jesus Christ’s instructions in the Bible, Christians must live in a manner distinct from that of the world. Christians are commanded to hold a higher standard of moral virtue and purity, guided by the principles of God’s Holy Word. We have instituted these guidelines and practices in an effort to help our members reflect Christ’s love for the church in their marriages.

## Homosexuality, Adultery and Cohabitation

MCCC believes that the Bible is God’s Word and our final source of authority in doctrine and practice. God’s design, from the very beginning of creation as discovered in the Bible, is that sexual relations are to be enjoyed within the boundary of a committed marriage relationship between one man/husband and one woman/wife (Genesis 2:24, Hebrews 13:4, I Corinthians 7:2-4). Sexual immorality in whatever form, be it homosexuality, pre-marital or extra-marital sex (adultery), is consistently condemned by God in His Word (see for example I Cor. 6:9-13, Gal. 5:19-21).

Therefore, it is the position of our church that **sex outside the Biblical definition of marriage are sins against God**, but they are not unforgivable sins. God specifically states that homosexuality is a sin (Lev. 18:22, Ro. 1:18, I Cor. 6:9- 11). We believe that God calls those engaged in homosexual behavior to repent of

their sin and commit to celibacy. We further believe that God calls those who are engaged in extra-marital or pre-marital sex to repent and follow God's design for marriage by committing to their current or future spouse exclusively as husband and wife.

Jesus Christ said to the woman caught in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you; go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). In the same way, Christ calls those engaged in any sexual sin to repent and accept Christ's love and his offer of forgiveness. The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that those engaged in certain behaviors, including "homosexual offenders," who refused to repent, would not inherit the Kingdom of God. But then he added, "such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 6:9-11). The wonderful message to the person engaging in homosexual or sexually immoral behavior is that through the power of Christ he or she can be forgiven and transformed. The temptation toward sexual sin may remain, but the Holy Spirit can give a person the power to remain celibate and pure.

As a result of the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Christians should reach out to those engaged in homosexual behavior and sexual sin with Christ's message of love and forgiveness without endorsing the behavior. Many support groups, counseling opportunities and ministries offer help and hope to those struggling with non-biblical behavior and attraction.

Those engaged in sex outside of marriage or in a homosexual lifestyle are welcome to attend services at MCCC. If a person expresses a desire to commit to Christ or become a member of the church and is involved in an inappropriate sexual relationship, whether homosexuality, adultery, cohabiting without marriage, or other, he or she must commit to the teachings of the New Testament. Any person willing to make such a commitment can be baptized and accepted into membership at MCCC.

**Unmarried couples who are cohabiting are asked to repent of their sexual impurity and remain sexually abstinent before they may be married in the church or by one of our ministers.**

We believe that Jesus did not come to restrict our sexuality, but to redeem our sexuality. We hope to be a church following the example of Jesus Christ and extend both mercy and truth to all caught in sexual sin. Please know that Jesus Christ offers forgiveness and access to power through the Holy Spirit to live a life of freedom and sexual purity.

**Approved by the elders: 03 / 09 / 2016**