

MARRIAGE, SINGLENESS, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

Adopted by the Board of Elders
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Church of the Good Shepherd
Bloomington, Indiana

PREFACE: Recognizing that the Bible is the very Word of the Living God to all people,¹ and understanding the priority of knowing and obeying its truths,² the elders at Church of the Good Shepherd are deeply committed to study and teach this Word with diligence and authority.³

Church of the Good Shepherd exists “to bring glory and honor to the triune God by promoting true worship, mutual edification, and gospel witness.”⁴

After prayer and the study of Scripture, the elders at Church of the Good Shepherd have come to the following convictions regarding marriage, singleness, divorce, and remarriage. This document is not intended by the elders of Church of the Good Shepherd to remove the individual’s accountability to God for his or her actions.

MARRIAGE is instituted by God as the union of a man and a woman,⁵ monogamous,⁶ and lifelong.⁷ This relationship, with these limitations, was established while man was in a state of perfection before the Fall⁸ and is, therefore, not confined to Christian believers. It is rather established for all members of the race. Consequently, Christian conversion, while bringing forgiveness for past violations of this pattern established by

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- ¹ *For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21). All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17).*
- ² *“I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food (Job 23:12). But He answered and said, “It is written ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD’” (Matthew 4:4). For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4). [So] we have the prophetic word [made] more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19).*
- ³ *Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, But happy is he who keeps the law (Proverbs 29:18). When they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,” should not a people consult their God? [Should they] [consult] the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn (Isaiah 8:19,20). But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! (Galatians 1:8) For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted [it] not [as] the word of men, but [for] what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13). ...the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15b).*
- ⁴ *Church of the Good Shepherd Bylaws, p. 1.*
- ⁵ *“FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, 8 AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 “What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate” (Mark 10:7-9). Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor [the] covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).*
- ⁶ *“You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).*
- ⁷ *So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man (Romans 7:3).*
- ⁸ *Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought [them] to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:18-24).*

God, does not bring freedom from its binding nature or consequences of disobedience.⁹ Marriage is an honorable estate that God Himself made, and it symbolizes to us the mystical unity, which is between Christ and His Church.¹⁰ This holy estate Christ made beautiful by His presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.¹¹

When sin entered the race, marriage was sorely affected.¹² God therefore created laws to govern the violation of His established pattern, while not changing the pattern.¹³

SINGLENES is not an inferior calling. Jesus was single and so, as far as we know, was the Apostle Paul.¹⁴ For those not under compulsion to marry,¹⁵ Paul commends the state of singleness as better than marriage.¹⁶ God calls us to serve Him in whatever state He has placed us,¹⁷ and we can trust Him to give us the grace to live in a godly way whether we are single or married.¹⁸ We are grateful for the single persons God has placed in our midst, and we commit ourselves to honoring them, supporting their service in the Kingdom, and encouraging the full exercise of their gifts in our fellowship.¹⁹

⁹ As an example of sin's consequences following true repentance and forgiveness, see 2 Samuel 11,12.

¹⁰ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also [does] the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:25-32).*

¹¹ Cf. John 2.

¹² *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make [one] wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. 8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Genesis 3:6-11)*

¹³ *He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way (Matthew 19:8).*

"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Matthew 5:18).

¹⁴ *Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. 8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I (1 Corinthians 7:7,8).*

¹⁵ *But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn [with passion] (1 Corinthians 7:9).*

¹⁶ *But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; 33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, 34 and [his interests] are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman...26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is (1 Corinthians 7:1,26).*

¹⁷ *Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. 18 Was any man called [when he was already] circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but [what matters is] the keeping of the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 7:17-19).*

¹⁸ *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).*

¹⁹ *For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, [each of us is to exercise them accordingly]: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness (Romans 12:4-8). Also, 1 Corinthians 12.*

DIVORCE: Marriage is an institution established and ordained by God. To deny its importance is to deny ourselves its intended blessings. Presently, there is widespread disregard, even scorn, for the divine standard for marriage as revealed in the Bible. This disregard, which is found both in the world and in many churches, endangers the family (our basic social unit)²⁰ and causes much suffering to the innocent, especially children. When found in the Church, it brings shame to the name of Christ.²¹

Scripture permits divorce as an accommodation to man's sin for the protection of an innocent²² party. Since divorce is only a concession to man's sin and is not part of God's original plan for marriage,²³ all believers considering divorce should have the same attitude toward divorce as does God—God hates divorce.²⁴

Notice that in Matthew 19:5-9 Christ teaches that divorce is an accommodation to man's sin and is in violation of God's purpose for the intimate unity of the marriage bond. It was a concession for the innocent party due to the insensitivity of the other partner to God. This is defined biblically as "hardness of heart."²⁵

Thus, for the protection of the sanctity of marriage and the protection of the innocent party, there are two sets of circumstances where Scripture specifically permits divorce:

First, divorce is permitted when one partner engages in sexual immorality—what Jesus referred to as "porneia."²⁶

²⁰Aristotle's famous view that if children did not love their parents and family members, they would love no one but themselves, is one of the most important statements ever made about the relation between family and society. The family permits an individual to develop love and security—and most important, the capacity to trust others. Such trust is the prerequisite for any larger social bonds. Only in the family are the individual's social tendencies aroused and developed and with these the capacity to trust others. A person who has developed no family bonds will have a very hard time developing any larger loyalties in later life. The normal process of such a development begins in the family and then "moves out" to larger social groupings. In the words of German ethologist Eibl-Eibesfeldt, "The human community is based on love and trust: and both are evolved through the family." Brigitte and Peter Berger, *The War Over the Family* (Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983), p. 174.
Cp. 1 Timothy 5:1-8.

²¹"However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12:14). [This text demonstrates dishonor coming to God's Holy Name and suffering coming to the members of a man's family—both caused by the sin of the father.]
For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written (Romans 2:24).

²²'Innocent' here is meant to designate the partner who has not violated the marriage bond; this is not to be taken to mean that any human being is ever innocent in an absolute sense.

²³The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:22-24).
They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND [HER] AWAY?" 8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way (Matthew 19:7,8).

²⁴"Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 "But not one has done [so] who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did [that] one [do] while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 16 "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously" (Malachi 2:14-16).

²⁵He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way (Matthew 19:8).
But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment (Mark 10:5).

²⁶It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1).

For further reading on the meaning of 'porneia,' as well as other subjects here treated, see John Murray, *Divorce* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1961), p. 21. Also, Andrew Cornes *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practices* (Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 201-202.

Second, divorce is permitted when a non-believing mate refuses to live with his or her believing spouse, especially because of his or her Christian testimony.²⁷

It is essential to keep in mind that the Bible merely permits divorce in these limited circumstances; it never commands divorce.²⁸

So then, in cases of sexual immorality and abandonment, the innocent partner is no longer bound to continue the marriage relationship, and the obligation to maintain or reinstate the marriage may not be imposed on the innocent party. At the same time, the forsaking of sin and reconciliation should be sought.

REMARRIAGE: Of the two sets of circumstances listed above where Scripture permits divorce, in the first, immorality, the innocent party is permitted to remarry.²⁹ In the second, abandonment by an unbeliever, it may be inferred that this is so.³⁰

The Scriptures do not explicitly address the situation in which a partner physically abuses, endangers, or abandons their family members. In such cases, the first step is discipline³¹ of the offending partner. If this fails, legal separation is possible and may even be necessary. The continuance of such behavior could, in the end, constitute a denial of the most holy Faith³² and result in the offending party being treated as an unbeliever.³³ “A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances.”³⁴

In view of the present widespread disregard of the divine pattern for marriage, both in the world and in the Church, the elders and pastors of Church of the Good Shepherd assert afresh our desire to obey the Scriptures and please God in our membership and leadership policies and practices.

At the same time, we acknowledge that facts in the termination of a marriage by divorce are hard to come by, and judgments as to innocence or culpability are fallible. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on the elders and pastors of the church to see that proper questions are asked and relevant issues are researched.³⁵ Therefore, the

²⁷ *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another [various] kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 12 For even as the body is one and [yet] has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not [a part] of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less [a part] of the body (1 Corinthians 12:7-15).*

²⁸ See the first three chapters of Hosea in which the adulterous wife is forgiven and restored.

²⁹ Cf. Matthew 5:32, 19:9.

³⁰ Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:12-15.

³¹ ‘Discipline’ includes the whole continuum of pastoral (shepherding) care, from counseling to excommunication.

³² *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8).* [Although this text is specifically referring to the duty grown children have to provide for the needs of their widowed mother, the underlying principle of the natural family being one’s first responsibility is equally applicable to a man’s or woman’s duty to provide for their spouse and/or children.]

³³ *“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 “But if he does not listen [to you,] take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:15-18).*

³⁴ Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:15.

³⁵ Cf. Acts 20:17-35; also Ezekiel, chapters 3 and 33.

following is to be considered an attempt to be faithful and demonstrate faithfulness to the divine pattern for marriage rather than an attempt to pinpoint divorce as the only or most serious sin today.

Unbiblical divorce is only one area of disobedience to the commands of Scripture in contemporary life. In singling out divorce, we are not lessening the necessity of obedience in all other areas where the Bible speaks. Nor do we mean to say that repentance and forgiveness are less possible or acceptable for those who violate God's law in marriage,³⁶ or that restoration of those who have sinned in this area is less necessary for the Church than is true of any other sin or sinner.³⁷

In cases where divorce took place on non-biblical grounds and where the guilty party repents, the grace of God is operative at the point of repentance. The repentant party will endeavor to restore the marriage whenever possible as a sign of true repentance. In other words, where two believers were divorced on non-biblical grounds, the grace of God becomes operative at the point of repentance and confession, and they can once again experience the joy of their relationship with Christ and their mate. We realize that much healing must take place to accomplish reconciliation and both partners must commit to prayer, patience, perseverance, and pastoral care in restoring the marriage relationship.

A true sign of repentance will be a desire to implement 1 Corinthians 7:11.³⁸ This involves a willingness to remain unmarried or else to be reconciled to their mate.

In cases where a believer obtained a divorce on non-biblical grounds and remarried, the second marriage union is recognized as "adulterous"³⁹ and repentance is called for. If repentance takes place, it is recognized that to obtain a second divorce would disobey Scripture.⁴⁰ Hence, they are to remain in the second marriage and, through repentance, experience the joy of God's forgiveness.

Obedying and teaching the sanctity of marriage is an urgent duty imposed upon the leaders and members of Church of the Good Shepherd. Providing a place of refuge and recovery for those who have been divorced and, if necessary, restoring those who have fallen are equally urgent duties. Any tension or conflict between these two must be resolved on a scriptural basis, and in a spirit of love.⁴¹

SHEPHERDING APPLICATIONS: Through preaching and teaching, we declare Scripture's commands about marriage and sexuality to all ages. We warn against unbiblical divorce. We encourage healthy, happy marriages. God commands and, as your leaders, we require that all those under our pastoral care (children, high school students, college students, young adults, adults, widows and widowers, those single) turn their backs on all

³⁶ *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor [the] covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).*

³⁷ *Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; [each one] looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted (Galatians 6:1).*

³⁸ *But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband 11 (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife (1 Corinthians 7:10,11).*

³⁹ *"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18). Also Mark 10:11,12.*

⁴⁰ *"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts [it] in her hand and sends her out from his house, 2 and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's [wife,] 3 and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts [it] in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, 4 [then] her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance" (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).*

⁴¹ *Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions (Proverbs 10:12).*

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

forms of sexual sin—fornication, adultery, homosexual practice, bestiality—indeed, any sex outside of marriage.⁴² By God’s grace we will be a Family of God that gives itself to chastity in singleness and faithfulness and purity in marriage.⁴³

MARRIAGE SERVICES WITHIN CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD: Services of marriage in this house of worship will be between two Christians, and will be performed by the pastors of our congregation, or another Christian pastor invited by the Pastor in conjunction with the Board of Elders. We will not marry couples where both partners are non-Christians or those that are to be unequally yoked—a believer to a non-believer.⁴⁴

During pre-marital counseling, the pastoral staff will ensure that couples understand and are committed to Scripture’s teaching as outlined in the previous sections. If one or both partners are not committed to this teaching a pastor will not perform the ceremony and use of the church building will not be permitted.

TROUBLED MARRIAGES AND DIVORCE WITHIN CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD: All those who are a part of Church of the Good Shepherd are to avail themselves of pastoral care in the initial stages, as well as later crises, of marital difficulty. Every effort will be made to bring reconciliation and renewal to marriages that otherwise would terminate in divorce. Members of our pastoral staff will not counsel divorce without first consulting with two elders and securing their concurrence with such counsel.

If a couple affiliated with Church of the Good Shepherd becomes divorced and the pastors and elders have not been in consultation with them prior to the divorce, when the matter is brought to light, the Board of Elders shall seek to determine the facts. If a violation of scriptural commands is clear and the elders find the individual(s) unwilling to submit to the Lord in the matters at issue, the elders will, with much prayer, proceed to discipline.

If the elders know of any marriage in our church family that is deteriorating or showing serious signs of strain, it shall be their responsibility to make provision for support and spiritual direction for the family. It shall also be the responsibility of the elders to exercise pastoral care and discipline of individuals known to be practicing sexual sin.

PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS: Church of the Good Shepherd will not accept into membership persons who have left another church to avoid discipline consistent with the teaching of Scripture. Therefore, the church’s understanding of scriptural principles of marriage and sexuality will be clearly taught in membership classes, in high school classes, in college and singles groups, and from our pulpit.

⁴²*Flee immorality. Every [other] sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).*

Flee immorality. Every [other] sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (Ephesians 5:3-6).

⁴³*Marriage [is to be held] in honor among all, and the [marriage] bed [is to be] undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Hebrews 13:4).*

⁴⁴*“For they have taken some of their daughters [as wives] for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness.” (Ezra 9:2).*

39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:39).

Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4).

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. 17 “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. 18 “And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty”(2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Those who have been divorced prior to applying for membership will meet privately with a member of the pastoral staff and an elder to discuss the circumstances of their divorce. If the pastor and elder are satisfied, they will notify the other elders and recommend the acceptance of the individual(s) for membership. If there are questions, the pastor and/or elder will report this to the Board of Elders.

LEADERSHIP—PASTORS, ELDERS, AND DEACONS: It is the desire and aim of Church of the Good Shepherd not merely to teach obedience to scriptural commands, but also to model such obedience. Leaders have primary responsibility for this modeling. It is therefore essential that the leaders of the Church be an example to other members in their marriage relationships. Pastors, elders, and deacons are required, among other qualifications, to be “the husband of one wife.”⁴⁵ “The phrase ‘husband of one wife’ does not mean that a person cannot have had a divorce in his past since none of the other qualifications listed refer to specific acts in the past (prior to salvation or subsequent to salvation) but rather to qualities which currently characterize a man’s life. It is especially important, in cases where there has been a divorce in a man’s past, that there be a period of careful observation to see that his present marriage is characterized by pure devotion and sacrificial love.”⁴⁶ (Members of our church staff will meet these qualifications, also, with respect to the issues addressed in this policy.)

Since the Apostle Paul served as an elder of the Church while single, it seems the offices of the Church are not limited to those married. Nor is it our understanding that a person who remarries after his or her spouse has died is excluded from serving in these offices.

LEADERSHIP—COMMITTEE MEMBERS, SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, DIRECTORS, ETC.: It is the intent of this church to foster obedience to all scriptural principles, including those concerning marriage, in filling these offices as well. At the same time, we recognize we do not have the same scriptural qualification here as we do for pastors, elders, and deacons.

⁴⁵ *An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...12 Deacons must be husbands of [only] one wife, [and] good managers of [their] children and their own households (1 Timothy 3:2,12).*

⁴⁶ John MacArthur, Statement on Divorce and Remarriage (Grace Community Church).