

# Redemption Hill Church Marriage Policy

For the members of Redemption Hill Church



*What therefore God has joined together, let  
not man separate  
Matthew 19:6*

## Introduction

Marriage is a beautiful gift that has been given to humanity from the God of creation. In fact, the Bible begins and ends with a wedding. And the story of Scripture is one of a relentless groom pursuing His wayward bride. God takes marriage serious therefore His covenant people should take marriage seriously. The following document provides a biblical framework for understanding the purpose and implications of marriage as a Christian. The document provides necessary policies and practices for anyone desiring to be married by a Pastor at Redemption Hill. The following topics are addressed from a biblical framework: A Definition of Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, Cohabitation, and Pre-Marital Counseling. If you have questions regarding the policies or positions that are addressed in this topic, please contact one of the Pastors at Redemption Hill Church.

### A Definition of Marriage

“Marriage is not a human invention; it is a divine revelation.”<sup>1</sup> Marriage is a divine institution that has been revealed to us by God and is ordained by God. As a result, we must define marriage as God defines marriage in His Word. We reject the notion that gender is a social construct, and we agree with Scripture which informs us that marriage is firmly rooted in God’s sovereign design to create both male and female in His image as His supreme ambassadors on earth (Genesis 1:26-27). Thus, we acknowledge that God’s plan to multiply and fill the earth while spreading His majestic glory is achieved through the gift marriage. We believe that a biblical marriage is defined as the lifelong covenantal union between a man and a woman, which

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<sup>1</sup>Ray Ortlund, *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2016), 11.

mysteriously visualizes the eternal relationship between Christ and His Church for the glory of God. Genesis 2 provides clarity on the matter. Aware of Adam's incompleteness, God creates for him a helpmate from his side (Genesis 2:21-22). Thus, "God's creation of Eve demonstrates that God's plan for Adam's marriage, as well as for all subsequent marriages, involves a monogamous heterosexual relationship."<sup>2</sup> Following the creation of Eve, Scripture describes the beauty and significance of marriage by stating, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24, ESV).

### *Marital Policy*

Given our conviction, the elders of Redemption Hill Church will only marry a man and a woman who are seeking a monogamous, heterosexual, lifelong, covenantal union. We believe that the blessings of marriage and family are best experienced between two believers in Jesus as implied in Scripture (see Ephesians 5). However, for missional purposes, the elders of RHC will marry two non-believers, so long as they agree to the policies stated above and are willing to pursue marital counseling as prescribed in this document. Because Scripture compels believers not to be "unequally yoked" (2 Corinthians 6:14) the elders of RHC will not marry a believer and a non-believer, as it would make us complicit in sin.

### Divorce and Remarriage

Scriptures informs us that the bond between a husband and wife is to be lifelong. In Genesis 2:24, the words "hold fast" describe the nature of the union between a husband and a

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<sup>2</sup>Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 25.

wife (Genesis 2:24, ESV). That term is derived from the Hebrew word *davaq* which can be defined as “to make stick or to hang on to.”<sup>3</sup> This terminology describes the pledge that spouses are making in marriage. That pledge is then a lifelong commitment to the other individual until death breaks the bond of the union (Romans 7:1-2). Hence why the verse ends with the phrase, “and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24, ESV) Of this bond Jesus states, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:6b, ESV) God, who created and instituted marriage, is therefore uniquely involved in forming and establishing the bond of marriage, unless falls outside of the biblical definition of marriage. So long as the union exists from God’s perspective, divorce should never be an option.<sup>4</sup> As John Murray states, “Divorce is the breaking of a seal which has been engraven by the hand of God”<sup>5</sup>

### *Concessions for Divorce*

While God does not desire divorce, because of sin, there are certain instances in which divorce is permitted. What are those instances? Jesus provides a few discourses which shed light on the issue of divorce and remarriage. To the Pharisees seeking to test Him, Jesus states, “...whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:9, ESV) In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says something similar: “...everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 5:32,

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<sup>3</sup>Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Accordance electronic edition, version 3.0. Leiden: Brill, 2000

<sup>4</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, rev. and enl. ed. (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 591.

<sup>5</sup>John Murray, *Divorce* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1961), 33.

ESV). Unless sexual immorality is the grounds for divorce, a divorce and subsequent remarriage constitutes adultery or causes one to commit adultery, which is a violation of the seventh commandment. Why so? Because the bond of marriage was never broken in the eyes of God.

According to Jesus the only permissible ground for a divorce is sexual immorality by either the husband or the wife. The words “sexual immorality” is derived from the greek word *porneia*, which covers a vast range of sexual acts that occur outside of God’s design for sex. Sex is a gift to be enjoyed only in the confines of a biblical marriage between husband and wife. Considering Jesus’ teaching, we believe that the only permissible dissolution of the marriage bond is adultery by a spouse. Paul does inform the church in Corinth that if a non-believer abandons a believer, then divorce is permissible (1 Corinthians 7:15, ESV). This is a special case in which a union already existed between a non-believer and a new believer. With that said, we believe the only permissible grounds for divorce and remarriage is adultery, and in some cases abandonment.

*Divorce/Remarriage Policy - If you have been divorced, please read this section.*

The elders of RHC desire not to be complicit in the sin of adultery. If you were aware of the severity of divorce from a Scriptural lens, had a regenerated heart at the time, and your previous divorce did not meet the concessions laid out in Scripture, we cannot, in good conscience, marry you. However, “whenever divorce is morally acceptable, remarriage is permissible.”<sup>6</sup> We believe we serve a gracious God. Jesus redeems what sin has ruined. If you

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<sup>6</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, rev. and enl. ed. (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 631.

were ignorant and unaware of the seriousness of divorce, you can speak to an elder to explain your situation. In those instances, we will examine each situation on a case-by-case basis.

### Cohabitation

Our culture has popularized cohabitation.<sup>7</sup> For the sake of clarity, cohabitation can be defined as a couple living together prior to marriage. Whatever the arguments for the justification of cohabitation might be, it is not permissible according to Scripture. According to Genesis 2:24, the bond that pulls a husband away from his parents, and a wife from her parents, is the bond of marriage. The text implies that the joining together, and thus living together in the same home, should occur when the couple is sealed by the covenant of marriage. Not only that, but cohabitation provides the grounds for potential fornication, which is prohibited by Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:18). Scripture teaches that sexual intercourse is to be enjoyed only within the covenantal, sacred bond of marriage.<sup>8</sup> Sexual intercourse is the intimate act of joining together in one flesh which consummates the marriage union. Sexual intercourse prior to marriage is a sin. Furthermore, recent statistics reveal that cohabitation is not a guarantee of marriage, and certainly not a guarantee for a successful marriage.<sup>9</sup> In obedience to Scripture, and to best enjoy the blessings and benefits of marriage, couples should only live together after they have been married.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 585.

<sup>8</sup>Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 78.

<sup>9</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, rev. and enl. ed. (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 631

### *Cohabitation Policy*

If you are currently living with with your fiancée, we graciously request that you separate for a season until you are married. Because cohabitation provides grounds for lusts in hearts and sexual immorality with bodies, the elders of RHC will not marry a couple who continues to cohabit. If you are not cohabitating with your fiancée, please remain separate until you have been wed. If you have further questions regarding cohabitation, please email an elder.

### Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling prepares two broken sinners for a lifelong covenantal union in marriage with a gospel centered framework. Using Scripture as a framework, the Pastor who marries you and your spouse will walk you through 6 sessions. Each session is 1.5 hours in length and is designed to reveal conditions in one's heart condition and prepare him/her for the issues that arise in marriage, while keeping their gaze fixed upon Jesus. The sessions covered are include: What is Marriage?, Covenant vs Contract, Roles, Conflict, Sex, and Money and Possessions. Please, email the Pastor who is marrying you to schedule your counseling sessions. We ask that you begin your counseling at least three months prior to your wedding date.

### *Premarital Counseling Policy*

Premarital counseling is a requirement for those wishing to be married by a Pastor at RHC. Both future spouses are required to attend each session together. To schedule your preliminary meeting and begin counseling, or to ask questions regarding counseling, please email [admin@rhccartersville.com](mailto:admin@rhccartersville.com).

## Bibliography

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