



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH  
DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE AND  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
POSITION PAPER

POSITION P-4  
Adopted: 2/1/11  
Revised: 9/9/14  
Revised: 6/15/15  
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Biblical marriage is the covenanted union of one man and one woman, which is publicly pledged and exclusive for life. Jesus clearly confirms the permanence of marriage, saying “they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matt. 19:6). Building strong marriages and families is one of the church’s highest goals, since marriage is to re-image the permanent, faithful relationship of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-32; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). When a marriage runs into difficulty, the priority is true reconciliation, not superficial coping strategies or repressed animosities. Anything short of that is a failure to honor God’s intent for marriage.

The Bible prohibits marital unfaithfulness of all kinds, including neglect (1 Cor. 7:3-4, 1 Tim. 5:8), sexual unfaithfulness before or during the marriage (Gal. 5:19-21), and leaving a marriage for another person (Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:32). Failure to honor the marriage vows is always sinful, i.e. a fundamental violation of relationship (Ex. 20:14; 1 Cor. 6:9; Heb. 13:4).

The Bible also has strong condemnation for domestic violence of any kind in a marriage. Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used to gain and maintain power and control over intimate relationships. Controlling behaviors include verbal, psychological, physical, financial, sexual, property, animal and spiritual abuse.

Scripture is specific in its condemnation for violence (Ps 11:5, Prov. 6:16-19, Rom. 3:15-18) sexual abuse (Deut. 22:25-26, Ezek. 22:11,21) verbal abuse (Prov. 12:18, Prov. 18:21, James 3:5-6, 8-9) spiritual abuse (Ezek. 22:25-26, 28, Matt. 23:1-5, 11-13) and neglect (1 Cor. 7:3-4, 1 Tim. 5:8).

As a basic principle, we encourage a zero tolerance for domestic violence in any relationship. We encourage clear communication, setting clear boundaries, and enforcing clear consequences for abusive behavior.

We also believe that God has provided protection for men, women and children through the church, civil law, godly counselors, prayer and other practical measures. We believe God can restore broken people and broken marriages by His grace, by the power of His Spirit, and by His practical truths found in scripture.

*There are times in the course of a marriage where either a short term or long term separation may be appropriate. A separation could be recommended by a member of the Pastoral Staff, Elder Team or their designates in consultation with at least one other member of the team. The separated couple should be working toward marital reconciliation.*

For further information on Grace Community Church’s position on marital separation see POS P-5 Marriage and Separation Position Paper.



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Divorce entails a formal recognition that the destroyed marital relationship is beyond hope of recovery, and that the severance between husband and wife cannot be repaired. Jesus addresses two specific things that can be fatal to a marriage: hardness of heart (Matt. 19:8; Deut. 24:1) and sexual uncleanness (*porneia* Matt. 19:9). He is clear that these must not be thought of as “approved” divorces; there are no circumstances where divorce is sin free. Covenant-breaking is an extreme measure to be considered as preferable only in the most calamitous situations. The option to be pursued is always repentance, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. But when all efforts and options have been exhausted so this option is no longer possible, where entrenched sin results in irreconcilable abandonment, divorce is a reality.

Jesus condemns husbands and wives who leave their spouses for other people (Mark 10:11-12). Yet he also expects the abandoned wife to be remarried, charging the adultery to the original husband (Matt. 5:32). Remarriage in these cases is not mandated, nor is it presented in any way as the solution to the prior, sinful situation. Yet remarriage is assumed as an option after the divorce.

Broken marriages damage not just the spouses, but immediate and extended families, the church, and society at large. Divorce is always the product of sin, but it is not the unforgiveable sin. The goal will always be to move divorced people back into the recognition and experience of God’s healing grace, and back to God's pattern for life. This process should begin with support of the church body, so that the individuals will find forgiveness and cleansing for the trauma wreaked by the breaking of covenanted marriage vows. This will always include personal sin, not just damage from the sin of the spouse and the circumstances.

When restoration has brought the person back to wholeness, there is the possibility of another marriage, although that marriage will always be overshadowed by the presence of the former spouse and the broken marriage bond. It can be successful when done under the care of the church, with honesty about sin, and the power of the Spirit for Christ-like life. Grace never ignores sin, but works God’s healing in moving broken, sinful people to God’s pattern for all of life.

When, in the judgment of the Pastoral Staff, Elder Team, or their designates (in consultation with at least one other member of the team) and a sufficient amount of time and healing has taken place then a remarriage can be considered.

#### Works Cited:

Hendricks, James E; Hendricks, Lindy. *Crisis Intervention in Criminal Justice and Social Service*, Charles C. Thomas Publisher Ltd, Book