

# ON DIVORCE

## A RED MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CHURCH POSITION PAPER

When members of Red Mountain Community Church pursue divorce, it breaks the heart of our Lord and it places the Church leadership in a very precarious position. People who experience marital difficulties need our support and they need to be reminded of things like God's unwavering love for them, and His unconditional forgiveness of sin. At the same time God has spoken with clarity on the subject of marriage and divorce, and we as leaders are called on to teach His counsel to those under our charge. We want to be faithful in both caring for you and in teaching you. We want to support you, but in the right direction. The following observations will summarize for you how we view divorce. The intention is to communicate both Biblical truth on the subject and some practical realities of how it will be handled in our Church.

1. We believe that God's original intention in marriage as recorded in Genesis 2 was that it be a loving, joyous, fulfilling, and permanent bond entered into by people who would live forever and do so together.
2. We believe that sin affected the permanence of this bond. Ever since the fall, marriage has been severed by physical death. In addition, once sin entered the human race, the relationship of marriage became particularly challenging for both men and women as recorded in Genesis 3, and marriages themselves began to fail. The result of sin was that marriage was not longer permanent in terms of eternity, and not even permanent in this life due to the adverse effects of sin on human behavior.
3. Due to this hardness of heart that humankind developed toward God, and because of that toward each other, all sorts of evils made their way into society. These evils range from murder, to false worship, to thievery, to broken relationships including divorce.
4. The Biblical data seems to clearly state that divorce is not a part of God's original design, but that it came about due to sin and the hardened condition of the human heart. Therefore He says very appropriately that He hates it (Malachi 2:16), as He does all things that are a product of sin (Proverbs 6:16).
5. The Bible clearly states that a spouse cannot be divorced for any and every reason. It is permissible in only two circumstances.
  - a. It is permitted in cases where a spouse is guilty of sexual sins that are a breach of the marriage covenant (Matthew 19:1-9).
  - b. It is permitted in cases where a non-Christian spouse initiates divorce of a Christian spouse (I Corinthians 7:12-16).
6. It is important to realize that even in these cases divorce is an option fraught with its own perils, of a financial, emotional, spiritual, legal, and relational nature. Because of this, divorce should only be accepted after all attempts at reconciliation have failed.

7. The Bible is silent on what is permissible in instances where abuse occurs. We believe that such incidences were foreseen by Paul.

A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband...(1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

It seems to us that he is embracing the sanctity of marriage, while allowing that sinful behavior may necessitate separation. We advocate separation (not divorce), in the following situations.

- a. Where there is sexual abuse of children.
  - b. Where there is a history of physical abuse and no progress in correcting the situation.
  - c. Where there is a history of continuous severe verbal abuse that endangers the well-being of spouse and children.
  - d. Where there is a lengthy pattern of mental or emotional sickness that the party refuses to accept responsibility for and receive treatment for.
8. When divorce occurs among members at Red Mountain Community Church it creates a great dilemma for the Church leaders. The following guidelines will generally govern those situations, though we reserve the right to approach them on a case-by-case basis.
- a. When divorce occurs as a consequence of sexual sin, we will remove the guilty party from membership unless they are repentant. If they are repentant, we will for purely practical reasons support them in finding another church where they can fellowship.
  - b. When divorce is initiated by a spouse for reasons other than those specifically permitted in Scripture, and not desired by the other spouse, we will firmly warn the individual of their responsibility before God in the action they choose to pursue. The person who in this way initiates a divorce will be asked to leave Red Mountain Community Church.
  - c. When a divorce is mutually agreed upon, but for reasons other than those specifically permitted in Scripture, we will firmly warn both spouses of their responsibility before God in the matter. They will not take the action with our blessing. We will expect the couple to decide with our help, which of them will attend Red Mountain Community Church, and which will find another church. The party that stays will be accountable to us in the matter of remarriage.
9. The issue of remarriage after a divorce is a separate matter and in all cases must be entered into very carefully and prayerfully, with thorough spiritual counsel. Generally, we would think that remarriage would be legitimate in cases where the divorce occurred in accordance with the actual statements of Scripture as stated under 5 above. In other cases the matter of remarriage would have to be examined on an individual basis.