

ON MARRIAGE

A RED MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CHURCH POSITION PAPER

Our Church is a community of people who are pursuing a specific way of living. It is a way of living we believe our Creator-God has called us to. To the best of our understanding, we seek to live this way. We also know that not all feel called to this lifestyle. We respect their right to chose and pursue a different one. Furthermore, we are determined not to be mean-spirited in holding to our convictions. We also know that all who arrive at Red Mountain Community Church are in process. We could even be understood as being in different states of disrepair! We are united together by our pursuit, not by the fact we have achieved it. As such people in process, we want to outline here how God has led us to approach marriage, and what you can expect to find us teaching and pursuing in this critical relationship.

We believe that **finding the love of your life is one of the greatest blessings God gives** you. We also believe that marriage is God's provision for making that relationship even better and for sustaining it so that it lasts a lifetime and leads to many other blessings. So an important part of what we do at Red Mountain Community Church is to help couples establish strong marriages and then help keep those marriages healthy.

To all who are interested in marriage at Red Mountain we think you need to know that we have an important presupposition about marriage. Here it is. God designed marriage, and when His design is followed the emotional health of both spouses is maximized and their full potential as human beings is realized. When His design is not followed, all bets are off. Therefore His design is paramount to us and we regard it as a precious possession to embrace and pass along to you.

HOW WE UNDERSTAND MARRIAGE

We believe that God's will regarding marriage is very plain. Marriage is a lifetime agreement entered into by a man and a woman. That agreement consists of their vow to love one another according to the pattern of love taught by the Bible, until they are parted by death. We help establish marriage in this sense as a legally binding agreement, with the appropriate documentation required by the Laws of the State of Arizona.

OUR VISION FOR MARRIAGE

Our vision for you goes way beyond helping you have a beautiful, legal ceremony and collecting a fee! We want to start you down the path that enriches both you and your spouse, and that helps you rise to all that God has created you to be. Consequently, we are interested in helping you along the way in your journey. And so in our Church ministry we provide much that will stimulate individual spiritual growth. It is a great thing to be a spouse who is growing spiritually and to have a spouse that is doing the same. Through our marriage ministry we provide opportunities and resources that refresh marriages. We also provide counseling through the rough spots and stalemates that can develop along the way. We even envision you helping others build a healthy marriage through the lessons you learn together. So we are all in—not just to cheer for you at the starting line.

BEFORE YOU'RE MARRIED

Since we share your desire to start well, we will ask you to attend pre-marital counseling sessions that we provide. This is a requirement if you wish to have your wedding in our Church or if you desire one of our pastors to perform the ceremony. In some cases, we may allow you to receive your counseling at another church, but we must process that decision together. This counseling will help you understand differences and similarities between you. It will help you identify things that otherwise might surprise you in an unpleasant way. We have never seen a couple that does not profit greatly from this investment of time.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE CEREMONY

There is much about the ceremony itself that you will have opportunity to shape. All of the pastors and Elders at our Church have their own style that is unique. But there are some common elements that you should expect from all of us that are non-negotiable. So **expect that we will present the gospel** as part of the ceremony. By that we mean that we will express this basic Christian belief, that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world as predicted and as prescribed by Scripture, and that God raised Him from the dead. You should also **expect that you will be called on to promise certain things** to each other. You may express these things in vows you yourself write, but it will matter to us what those vows say since they are the heart and soul of the marriage commitment. Expect that part of the ceremony will be a short charge to you from the pastor or Elder regarding **practical things that will help keep your marriage healthy**. Expect that we will pray for you and your new home during the ceremony. And of course, expect the moment when we pronounce you husband and wife. There are a number of other elements that are often part of wedding ceremonies that you can add. You will have opportunity to talk through this with the person who performs your ceremony and our spirit will be that of making the whole experience a meaningful one for you and your guests.

There are some pragmatic details of your wedding ceremony, such as fees charged for use of the church and for officiating at your wedding. These are covered in a separate document that our Marriage and Family Ministry can make available to you.

MANAGING WEDDING CHARADES

We live at a time when no one likes a lack of authenticity. They distrust churches that do a ceremony that lacks transparency and that leaves an elephant in the room. We don't want to be part of that charade. You need to know that our reputation as a Church is at stake in your ceremony, and in a very real sense, Christ's reputation is at stake in it as well. We need your help to honor Christ's reputation. There are several things that could make it very awkward for us to honor Christ as we do your ceremony. One is if you and the one you love are already living together. Another is if you have previously been married. Help us! Please know that none of these things keep us from wanting to help you establish a home that is healthy and strong. So we ask you to be honest with us about situations like these and help us be who God needs us to be as ministers of His truth. In doing that you will meet your own need to be real as well. This is part of you beginning well and it is part of us being of maximum benefit to you. There are a number of ways we can manage awkward things well, if we engage them together. We're anxious to do that with you.

A PARTING WORD

We sincerely want to help you start well, continue to be happily married, and manage the changes that life together will bring. At Red Mountain you'll find great support for the many roles you will fill in the years ahead in your home. We hope that you'll partner with us in that journey!