

# Bread of Life Church Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

October 2014

## **A Ministry Statement on Marriage and Sexuality**

God created male and female in His own image (Genesis 1:27). As an expression of His goodness to man, God created woman so that they can be united together as one flesh in marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). While many will choose to marry, the Bible also affirms singleness as a desirable, God-given gift (1 Corinthians 7:17-40). God designed marriage to be a lifelong, monogamous, holy relationship. While divorce violates God's original design in marriage (Malachi 2:10-16), it is permitted in rare situations (Matthew 19:1-12; 1 Corinthians 7:15). Sexual intimacy is to be enjoyed exclusively between a man and a woman within marriage. Anything outside of this violates God's call to sexual purity (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

### 1. Marriage

- God has instituted marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant between a man and a woman that unites them together as one.

*Genesis 2:18, 24 <sup>18</sup>The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."...<sup>24</sup>That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

- A Christian home begins with two believers entering into the marriage covenant (Joshua 24:14-15; 1 Corinthians 7:39). The Bible affirms the necessity and importance of a man and a woman sharing a common allegiance to God (Ezra 10:2-4; Malachi 2:10-12). So when choosing a spouse, it is good to seek godly and wise counsel. Once a couple has decided to marry, it is important to seek pre-marriage counseling.

*2 Corinthians 6:14-18 <sup>14</sup>Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup>What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:*

*"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."*

*<sup>17</sup>Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."*

*<sup>18</sup>And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

- A Spirit-empowered marriage points to Jesus’ relationship with his bride, the church. Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19 spell out the primary responsibilities within a marriage. As the church submits to Christ, so also the wife should submit to and respect her husband in everything. As Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, so also the husband should love and sacrifice for his wife.

*Ephesians 5:31-33 <sup>31</sup>“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”<sup>32</sup>This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

## 2. Singleness

- Singleness, like marriage, is a gift from God (1 Corinthians 7:7). God, in his grace, enables us to find joy and contentment in our status, whether single or married.
- Although many have a desire to be married, some choose a single life for the sake of God’s kingdom (Matthew 19:11-12).
- Along with being spared the added troubles and concerns related to marriage, singleness also allows us to live with an undivided devotion to the Lord.

*1 Corinthians 7:32-35 <sup>32</sup>I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord. <sup>33</sup>But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—<sup>34</sup>and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. <sup>35</sup>I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.*

## 3. Divorce / Remarriage

- God has created the marriage covenant to be a lifelong, permanent relationship marked by fidelity (Proverbs 5:15-18). No one should separate what God has joined together (Mark 10:6-9).
- Knowing that divorce breaks faith and brings harm to the one whom we should protect, we must make every effort to preserve and strengthen our marital union (Malachi 2:14-16). This may entail pastoral and/or professional counseling.
- Rather than prescribing divorce for a difficult marriage, the Bible permits it in the case when hearts have been hardened by sin and resistant to God's Spirit (Matthew 19:8).
  - Jesus states that divorce is allowable when sexual immorality has occurred (Matthew 19:8-9).
  - When believers encounter struggles with their unbelieving spouses, they should work hard to remain in the marriage. But when abandoned by a spouse, they are not bound in these circumstances (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).
  - While the Bible does not explicitly state physical (or emotional) abuse as grounds for divorce, we recognize the great harm and injury that may be inflicted upon a spouse. It contradicts the elements of marriage - the unity and intimate relationship between husband and wife. In the case of domestic violence, it may be necessary to temporarily separate from the abusing spouse and to ensure the safety of the family (e.g., protective shelter, restraining order).
  - Whenever there is a temporary separation, the goal is to repair and rebuild the relationship. When couples reconcile with one another through God's truth and Spirit, the world gains a greater appreciation for the power of the gospel. When reconciliation is not possible, we acknowledge that divorce may be the last resort.
- We understand that enduring the loss of a spouse through a divorce is one of life's most difficult and painful challenges. To help foster the gradual process of recovery and growth, we encourage joining a support group (Prayer Healing Ministry), seeking pastoral/professional counseling, and participating in the life of a local church.
- When there are biblical grounds for divorce, remarriage is allowable. If a person chooses to remarry, it is essential to find someone who is growing in their faith and is committed to building a healthy marriage (1 Corinthians 7:39).

1 Corinthians 7:39 <sup>39</sup>*A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.*

- In the event of those who have gone through a divorce without biblical grounds, it is important for them to display a genuine repentance over this failure. In the absence of true contrition, the church will seek to restore their fellowship with God and the believing community (Matthew 18:15-35). Getting a divorce without biblical grounds may limit the extent of their leadership within the church.

Matthew 18:15-20 <sup>15</sup>*“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. <sup>16</sup>But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ <sup>17</sup>If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”*

- Depending on the circumstances, our staff will exercise discretion when asked to officiate a remarriage.

#### 4. Sexuality

- God has created sex as a sacred gift to be enjoyed within the exclusive bond of marriage.

Hebrews 13:4 <sup>4</sup>*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

- Once we become followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14). Since we are temples of God’s Spirit, we must flee sexual immorality and honor God with our physical bodies (1 Corinthians 6:12-7:5).

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 <sup>18</sup>*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their*

*own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*

- God has called us to be a holy community. That includes the avoidance of sexual immorality and the pursuit of moral purity.

*1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 <sup>3</sup>It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup>that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup>not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; <sup>6</sup>and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. <sup>7</sup>For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

- Sexual immorality violates God's original design for marriage and our call to holiness. The sin of immorality involves a variety of forms which includes adultery, polygamy, premarital sex, lust, pornography, cross-dressing, homosexuality, bisexuality, incest, and bestiality (Exodus 20:14; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:2; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Matthew 5:28; Deuteronomy 22:5; Romans 1:26-27; Leviticus 18:6, 23).

## 5. Homosexuality

- We recognize that the subject of homosexuality engenders strong emotions – in personal conversations, educational settings, and political discourse. In fact, the current climate of our culture assumes and advocates homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. So it's essential to understand what God says about this topic and how we as a church can best serve our generation with compassion and biblical integrity.
- Homosexuality relates to the attraction, inclination, and/or practice of same-gender sexual relationships.
- While we acknowledge homosexual inclinations may arise from innate desires, past traumatic experiences, family upbringing, and cultural influences, we are ultimately responsible for our personal beliefs and behavior. In a world tainted by sin, our journey in holiness requires a

renewing of our hearts and minds (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:1-10) and a resistance of our fleshly desires (Galatians 5:16-26).

- God's gift of marriage is to be enjoyed within a heterosexual relationship – between a man and a woman. Homosexual activity and relationships are unnatural and displeasing to God.

*Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

*Genesis 2:23-24* <sup>23</sup> *The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."* <sup>24</sup> *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

*Roman 1:26-27* <sup>26</sup> *Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.* <sup>27</sup> *In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

*1 Corinthians 6:9* <sup>9</sup> *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,*

*1 Timothy 1:9-10* <sup>9</sup> *realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers* <sup>10</sup> *and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,*

- As individuals struggle with homosexual desires and practices, our commitment as a church family is to maintain God's holiness and show Jesus' compassion. We uphold God's holiness and righteousness by encouraging genuine repentance from our sins, including sexual ones. We express Jesus' compassion and grace when we create a safe and supportive environment that seeks to understand their struggle, help them experience God's forgiveness, and encourage each other to follow the biblical pattern for relationships.
- We will uphold the biblical standards of church and family in our ministry. In accordance with our beliefs and practices, we will not officiate same-sex marriages, host events sponsored by LGBT groups, or allow practicing

homosexuals in staff or leadership positions. As other situations may arise, we will make the best possible decisions in light of biblical truth.