

DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE POLICY



Spring Creek Bible Church



These guidelines are an attempt to respect Biblical teaching on divorce (cf. Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Romans 7:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16; Malachi 2:16); to acknowledge that we all need Christ's forgiveness and that His forgiveness and grace are available for any sin and the restoration of fellowship; and to apply Biblical teaching and the implications of that teaching to matters of divorce, remarriage, and church leadership at SCBC.

DIVORCE

Marriage has been instituted and ordained by God (Genesis 2:18, Ephesians 5:31). As a covenantal relationship which visibly expresses the relationship between God and His people, it is an indissoluble, sacred union between a man and a woman.

However, because of the fallenness of human nature and the resultant hardness of heart, the Scriptures permit divorce on two grounds:

- Sexual Immorality: *And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery* (Matthew 19:9). The word immorality includes homosexuality or other forms of deviant sexual behavior, as well as adultery and fornication.
- Desertion by an unbelieving spouse: *But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace* (1 Corinthians 7:15).

In such cases, the offending spouse shall come under the discipline of the elders for the purpose of repentance and reconciliation. Should extensive efforts to achieve restoration fail, the offending spouse shall be separated from church membership. The "innocent" spouse is *permitted*, but not under obligation, to divorce his/her spouse and is encouraged to seek the counsel of the elders.

REMARRIAGE

After divorce, the "innocent" spouse is free to remarry in the Lord. This should take place only after counsel has been sought through church elders. In cases where innocence is clouded, the Elder Board should examine each case on an individual basis.

The remarriage of believers may not be approved when:

- Divorce is being used as a vehicle to seek a different mate, since such pre-intent makes the divorce adulterous.
- Even though deemed not culpable, there is no evidence of repentance and brokenness over the circumstances that caused the divorce.
- Restoration of the original marriage remains a viable option.

IMPLICATIONS ON POTENTIAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP AT SCBC

1. Given the sacredness of the marriage covenant and the high importance of the church leader's character, marital example, and reputation, men who have been divorced will not typically serve in the office of elder or deacon at SCBC.
2. However, since Biblically a man's sins do not *necessarily* disqualify him from church leadership, the Elder Board's candidate review process will consider the timing and circumstances of his divorce, and his subsequent reputation and character (e.g. was he an unbeliever when he was divorced, was the divorce deemed Biblically permissible by the church, has he been faithfully living above reproach in the years since, etc.).
3. Divorced candidates, like candidates with any other significant past event that tests the serious eligibility requirements of 1 Timothy and Titus, must be similarly considered and thoroughly examined by the elders. Only those candidates who receive unanimous approval of the elders will be presented to the membership for a vote of confidence.
4. Divorced persons who are culpable and unrepentant should not hold positions of leadership or public ministry. Such persons are subject to loving church discipline. Those who marry unrepentant, culpable divorcees should not hold positions of teaching or leadership.
5. Wisdom seems to dictate that persons recently divorced, though not considered culpable in the divorce, should not hold positions of teaching or leadership. With the passing of sufficient time (at the discretion of the elders) and clear evidence of consistent godly living, a divorced person may be allowed to assume such positions.

The covenant of marriage is very serious and solemn and, on one hand, seems to warrant exhaustive guidelines for church positions regarding it in order to protect it. On the other hand, due to the number of factors and unique circumstances that surround every marriage, it isn't possible to put policies in print pertaining to every scenario. Therefore, the SCBC Elder Board will prayerfully evaluate each specific divorce and remarriage situation from the basis of Scripture and this policy statement.