

MARRIAGE FOR LIFE

Trinity Baptist Church's quest for enriched marriages

Adopted by the elders 5/18/06

Presented to Trinity Baptist Church 7/16/06¹

Our Position

Marriage: This is a sacred institution designed by God whereby one man and one woman commit themselves to live in faithfulness to God and each other for their earthly life (Genesis 2:18-24; Ephesians 5:31).

Divorce: Although God intends for marriage to be for life, and He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), He allows for divorce and remarriage if the sacred union of marriage has been violated by certain egregious acts of sexual immorality or desertion (Matthew 5:32, 19:3-9, 1 Corinthians 7:15).²

Even though God allows divorce under these circumstances, He does not counsel divorce; rather He desires reconciliation. Therefore, while the elders understand that divorce and desertion are realities that they must address, they do so in a manner that is always in harmony with seeking to lead people to follow God's initial plan for marriage.

Separation: There may be times that temporary separation is advisable.³

Remarriage: Although reconciliation is always preferred when possible, remarriage is allowed in cases where the Scripture permits divorce (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:15).⁴ In such cases a couple is offered every resource possible to ensure that their second marriage is a success. If the remarriage is performed by one of our elders, under the supervision of the church, the couple will be guided by an elder through the steps which best suit their situation.

The elders have a responsibility before God and our church family to help married couples start out right, navigate the trials of life, and maintain the sacred and lofty view of marriage that God intended.

Our Practice

Based on the teaching of Scripture concerning marriage and divorce⁵ our purpose and practice is to help the couples in our congregation experience the possibilities of a holy, happy, enduring marriages. We endeavor to develop a congregation where marriages are kept in a healthy state and where serious problems are rare. To accomplish this, we afford to all of the couples in our church the following ministries to strengthen marriages and the home.

- a. **Preaching and teaching** on the subject of marriage and family, which are also available on tape and internet.
- b. **Counseling** is encouraged and provided. Several of our elders specialize in this ministry. We also recommend professional counselors in the Norman area whom

- we trust.
- c. **Marital Mentoring** establishes relationships between older, more experienced couples and younger couples.
 - d. **Marriage retreats and seminars** on marriage are routinely offered and/or recommended by our church.
 - e. **Financial aid** for approved seminars and counseling for couples who cannot otherwise attend.⁶
 - f. **Personal discipleship** in order to mature in following Jesus Christ.
 - g. **Couples Campus Groups** teach annually on marriage

What to do when marital problems arise

We recognize that problems are inevitable in every marriage. When our members experience significant marital difficulties that may potentiate separation or divorce, we seek to address the needs.

Step 1: The responsibility of the members

It is the responsibility of all members to avail themselves to the available resources for strengthening their marriages.

When our church members deal with significant marital obstacles, it is their responsibility to seek counsel from the church elders or their designees⁷. They are available to pray and counsel couples, and also to arbitrate for them when necessary. Trinity takes this matter very seriously. We will prayerfully and patiently consider each couple's unique needs before making recommendations. It is the couple's responsibility then to follow the recommendations provided by their spiritual leaders.

Step 2: The elders' recommendations

The elders make recommendations to a couple that they believe will help the couple address the causes of their problems and move them toward resolution and reconciliation. These recommendations may include taking one or more of the following steps.

- a. Begin meeting with a church elder for marriage counseling.
- b. Attend a marriage conference, seminar, or retreat recommended by the elders.
- c. Read books or listen to tapes from a recommended list.
- d. Begin meeting with a recommended professional marriage counselor in the Norman area.
- e. Adjust ministry involvement in order to potentiate greater success in marriage.

Step 3: Requirements prior to divorce or remarriage

- a. If divorce is inevitable and allowable
The couple is expected to follow recommendations and requirements established by the elders. These stipulations are given by the church leadership for the welfare of the couple and their children, for the reputation of the church, and for the glory of God.
- b. If separation is inevitable

The elders will watch over the couple during this vulnerable period. Further counsel will be required. Every effort will be taken in order to restore the marriage to a healthy, joyful condition.

- c. If after every step has been taken, or a spouse is unwilling to seek reconciliation by following the steps presented, the elders will proceed in accord with Scripture, the best interest of the willing spouse, and the church.
- d. If remarriage is desired, the following guidelines will be used in order to ensure the couple is provided the best start. These steps may include:
 - a. A recommended waiting period to ensure emotional healing from the failed marriage
 - b. Premarital counseling
 - c. Professional counseling
 - d. Reading books that explain the unique dynamics of second marriages and blended families
 - e. Marriage Seminars
 - e. TEC classes

When is formal church discipline exercised with regard to separation or divorce?

If a couple/spouse pursues separation or divorce on grounds that are not supported biblically, or one or both are unwilling to follow the elder's steps to reconciliation, the elder(s) will approach the couple and appeal to them to reconsider their decision. Should they choose to disregard the teaching of Scripture concerning the sacredness of their marriage vows (Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:3-10; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7), it is appropriate for church discipline to be initiated toward the errant individual or toward both parties if necessary.

¹ The word "holy" was added to Para 1 under OUR PRACTICE 7/17/06

² Immoral refers to but is not limited to adultery, homosexuality, pedophilia, polygamy. Desertion refers to physical desertion.

³ This could include situations where physical danger exists, healing requires solitude...but does not allow extended separation beyond what the elder(s) deems essential for potential reconciliation.

⁴ Each elder maintains sole discretion in determining whom he will marry/remarry. The amount of time and counsel is determined based on individual circumstances.

⁵ See our Position

⁶ These funds are limited and may not always be available.

⁷ Elders' involvement in strengthening marriages is to be understood to mean elders or designees where applicable.