



Marriage Statement

The Elders of New Life Church

April 2011

The Issue

In recent years our culture has witnessed a relentless deterioration of the Biblical view of marriage. The divorce rate within our country's churches is nearly equal with that of the secular world. Now, even the very definition of marriage is being debated by our society. The rise of moral "tolerance" has been eroding the foundation of our society by devaluing and weakening the importance of a strong nuclear family. It is critical for the church to fully understand and teach God's design for marriage and to implement strategies to nurture healthy, Biblical marriages at New Life. This document affirms the Biblical model of marriage and is offered in a spirit of love and humility, not judgment or contention.

The Biblical Teaching

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are the inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God. The Bible begins in Genesis with the marriage of a man and a woman and ends in the Book of Revelation with the marriage of Christ and His bride, the Church. In between, God provides timeless blueprints for family life, which, if followed in a spirit of humility and obedience, provide the only true way to maintain healthy family relationships. God's plan for marriage is an exclusive, life-long covenant between a man and a woman, establishing a mutually supportive relationship. Marriage provides the framework for relational intimacy, sexual fulfillment, and raising children. Marriage reflects God's love for His church.

1. **We believe marriage is a spiritually, emotionally and physically fulfilling union created by God** (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:16) for His glory and honor. We believe marriage was the first institution designed by God. The marriage union, as created by God, forms the spiritual, emotional, physical, and economic foundation for individuals, the church, and society. Marriage is a legally binding public declaration of commitment given before God and recognized by the state. We acknowledge that couples will encounter many challenges that test marriage (1 Cor.7:28). We recognize that the combination of exhortation, accountability, and counsel from mature couples will go far in supporting marriages through those challenges.(Titus 2:1-8).
2. **We believe marriage is an exclusive, life-long covenant.** Marriage is an earthly relationship meant to last until the couple is separated by death. (Mt. 19:6; 22:30; 1 Cor. 7:39). Divorce is hated by God (Mal. 2:16) and it leads to much pain and dysfunction for every family involved. Therefore, we commit that reconciliation of marriages will be encouraged and divorce will be discouraged by our church leaders. Marriage is intended for life but we believe that God allows, and the Scriptures explicitly teach, two exceptions for divorce in the cases of: (1) unrepentant sexual sin (Matthew 19:9) and (2) desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15-16). We believe that God can restore broken people and broken marriages by His grace, by the power of His Spirit, and by His practical truths found in the Bible. We will encourage all divorced people to seek a deeper relationship with the Lord and to allow for spiritual and emotional healing.
3. **We believe marriage is meant to be the union of a single man and a single woman** (1 Cor. 7:2). The Bible makes it clear that God gives a wife to a husband and a husband to a wife, and they are to receive one another as God's unique and personal provision to help meet their mutual needs.
4. **We believe our church should create an environment where both husband and wife seek to help each other grow to full spiritual maturity.** As "iron sharpens iron" We believe God uses marriage to sharpen a man and a

woman to the image of Jesus Christ. Just as the Trinity reflects equal worth, but differing roles, we believe God created a man and a woman with equal worth (Gal.3:28) but differing roles and responsibilities in marriage. The husband is charged to be the servant leader of the family and sacrifice in love for his wife (Eph. 5:25-33). The wife is to nurture the husband's leadership in the family and treat him with respect.(Eph. 5:22-24, 33). This relationship is based on love and respect with both husband and wife submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ. (Eph. 5:21).

5. **We believe that marriage provides the framework for relational intimacy and oneness.** (Gen. 2:18). We will uphold the marriage commitment as that sacred institution of God in which men and women can experience the truest sense of spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy, so that two can become one. The complete fullness of this unity can only be achieved when both husband and wife are believers who are walking together with Christ.
6. **We believe that sexual fulfillment should only be found in the context of marriage.** Scripture forbids the practice of all sexual relationships outside of marriage. This includes same sex sexual relationships, stating it to be immoral and an unnatural sin. 2 (Lev.18:22; Rom. 1:22-27). God's plan is for sexual fulfillment to take place in the security of the marriage relationship. (Gen. 2:24; Heb.13:4). The gift of sex is to be reserved solely for one's spouse. Sexual activity outside of marriage, including living together, is sinful and damaging to the relationship³. The willingness to wait until marriage is a sign of self-control and respect. (1 Cor. 7:1-2, 8-9; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3-8). We are committed to teach respect for sexuality, the preservation of virginity and purity until marriage, and a recommitment to purity for those who have been sexually active outside of marriage.
7. **We believe that Godly marriage provides the best environment for the raising of children.** Children are a gift from God (Ps. 127:3) and are part of the Biblical charge to Adam and Eve. (Gen. 1:28). They grow in character and mature best in a home where both father and mother take an active role in their development. (Eph. 6:4). It is also at home that moral values are first taught and children have the opportunity to observe biblical manhood and womanhood modeled in a nurturing environment. We believe that when the husband-wife relationship is given priority, couples are able to fulfill their role as parents more effectively. Parents are giving their children a pattern for marriage relationships by the way they live their lives.
8. **We believe that marriage reflects God's love for His church and is symbolic of the deep devotion God possesses for His people.** (Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:6-9). We are committed to exhort and teach men to initiate a sacrificial love for their wives, in the same way that Jesus Christ initiated sacrificial love and demonstrated it fully on the cross. We are also committed to exhort and encourage all men and women who have unbelieving spouses and children to remain steadfast in their faithful witness and trust God to win their spouse through their own godly behavior. (1 Peter 3:1-7).

Footnotes

1. "New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released," The Barna Update, March 31, 2008, at barna.org.
2. While the Bible does address homosexuality, it does not explicitly mention same-sex marriages. Since Scripture teaches that homosexual acts are sinful, it is clear that same-sex marriages are not in God's will.
3. Not only is cohabitation sin, but research has shown that living together is not a healthy preparation for successful marriage. Overview of Cohabitation Research, David Olson and Amy Olson Sigg marriageworks.ohio.com/documents.
4. Some of this statement was borrowed from the Marriage Statement of Browncroft Community Church in Rochester, New York and from "The Family Manifesto" published by FamilyLife, a ministry of Campus Crusade.