

Divorce and Remarriage – A Position Paper For South Mountain Community Church

Introduction

The issue of divorce, particularly in the current cultural climate, is such a tremendously sensitive and poorly taught subject that the entire counsel of God must be examined to properly understand how it relates to Jesus' teachings. Many fine scholars who love the Lord disagree on this issue and it must be treated with a tremendous amount of mercy and grace. In no other period of human history has the ability to leave one's commitment of marriage been so prevalent and easy. Today, all that is required is a statement of irreconcilable differences. What, then, should be the response of the Christian?

Are Christians as apt to run and abandon our covenant of love and life together until death do us part as the rest of society? Sadly, statistics reveal that we are just as guilty. Maybe it is because of the fact that we really do not understand the concept of covenant, or maybe it is because we do not truly understand the sacrifice and forgiveness Jesus made for us. Either way, divorce has found a home in the church. It is our hope and prayer that it never makes its abode in yours.

The Biblical portrait of all relationship begins with God. Scripture tells us there is one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (i.e. in Deut. 6:4 the word for "one" is *echad*). This concept of the Trinity provides for us the ultimate model for a relationship (i.e. in Gen. 2:24 the word for "one" is also *echad*). Likewise, a husband and wife united in God should seek to be in relationship as similar to the Trinity as is possible in a fallen world with finite people. In the Trinity we see that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are all equal. Yet, we also see that Jesus submits to the Father, and that the Spirit submits to the Father and the Son. In the Trinity we also see great love, honest communication, authentic love & devotion, a diversity of personalities and functions, a unity of purpose, and complete oneness. Indeed, the Trinity is the ultimate relationship that serves as the model for all families and communities.

Christians should love the Word that God has given them and embrace the concept of marriage as the earthly manifestation of Christ and of His "bride" the church (Ephesians 5). Marriage is a living metaphor of this transformational relationship between Christ and the church. Instituted by God at creation, and

designed to reflect the loving relationship between God and His people, marriage is preeminent, intended to be permanent, and must be guarded wisely. Just as we are new creations created for His workmanship, we are living out the new covenant in marriage.

The Christian marriage becomes a very vital way by which we bring glory to God. Our marriages speak to the world the reality of Christ in our lives. His love and covenant with His bride (the church) are revealed through the love and covenant of two becoming one flesh. We no longer remain individuals with individual plans and ambitions. God joins us together into "ONE," and as one, we reflect the beautiful union between Christ and us.

Scripture is clear: God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). The pain of divorce is well known and has deeply impacted many people's lives. Well over half of those who read this will have endured divorce as children of parents who gave up on their promises of lifelong devotion to each other. The subsequent ripples emanating from these rifts have adversely affected and scarred those in close proximity to the divorce, as well as future generations.

Scripture has much to say about the matter, but not exhaustively. Opinions are numerous regarding how to interpret what Jesus and the apostle Paul said regarding divorce and remarriage. This is partly due to very difficult exegetical options we encounter when studying Scripture. It is also due to the varying beliefs, behaviors, and degrees of commitment people bring into marriage. Complicating the issues are numerous challenges that assault families. These include unrealistic expectations and subsequent disappointment, financial problems, immaturity, selfish ambitions, commitment to personal pleasure, and sins that betray love, commitment, and safety within marriage.

Marriage is also assaulted from external sources. Embedded social temptations to taste the thrill of "the forbidden" endanger the covenant of marriage. Social structures make no-fault divorce laws inviting when relationship development becomes hard. Serial divorce-and-remarriage, a contemporary variation of polygamy, has become common. At the core of the problem is society's prevailing, but flawed, pledge to eudemonism, a philosophy that places happiness and fulfillment as the highest achievement of humanity. According to this philosophy, an action is morally right if it makes a person happy. God is

expected to agree with and serve this goal or be abandoned.

It must be the commitment of all who wrestle with these issues to follow Scripture wherever it goes. We must live and enjoy life within the expectations God designed. This fully acknowledges that we live in a fallen world in which broken covenants, betrayals, and enormous harm are inflicted without apparent justice being served.

The pastors and elders of South Mountain Community Church have struggled long and hard with these issues in order to faithfully represent the will of God. This document is an attempt to clearly present our consensus.

What do we know for certain about marriage?

1. **God created marriage** when He created Eve from Adam (Genesis 2:22-23). Following the story of her creation, Eve is immediately declared Adam's wife (Genesis 2:25).
2. **God designed marriage to be a permanent union** that is not to be broken (Matthew 19:4-6). The two became "one flesh," through sexual union, resulting in a singular, unique relationship. Since God ratifies the marriage, no one is to separate the marriage.
3. **Marriage is a covenant**, which is comprised of a man and a woman declaring their devotion to each other, stipulating commitments, and binding themselves to one another through solemn vows. Witnesses ratify and officially record the event. Anniversaries are celebrated to revisit the covenant. Although similar to a contract in many respects, a covenant has higher obligations since the parties enter into it agreeing with God that it is to be a lifelong, loyal union to which He (God) is witness (Malachi 2:14; Ecclesiastes 5:4).
4. **A husband must provide.** A biblical marriage partnership is one in which the husband commits to providing materially and emotionally to ensure his wife's and children's well-being (Exodus 21:10; Ephesians 5:28-29; 1 Timothy 5:8).
5. **A husband is accountable** for his family's well-being and conduct. Along with the husband's requirement to provide comes his responsibility for his family. When family members do wrong, he is responsible to correct and assure it is made right. When events endanger the family or members of the family, he is responsible to defend and prudently steer his family to a right outcome. Adam did neither. He stood silent while Eve

inhaled the pox of death from the serpent's breath and in doing so condemned all generations that followed (Genesis 3:1-6). God called for Adam, not Eve, as the primary agent of responsibility for the family (Genesis 3:8-11). This is called headship. Headship is being the primary agent of responsibility, whom God will ultimately call to give an account. This God-given role of headship, and the wisdom attained from the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7), create the motivation for a man to manage his home responsibly (1 Timothy 3:4; 1 Peter 3:7).

6. **God hates divorce:** God made no provision for severing a marriage relationship. God is opposed to divorce (Malachi 2:16). God hates divorce unequivocally.
7. **Death ends the marriage covenant:** The death of a spouse terminates the marriage covenant (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39).

Does South Mountain Community Church honor cohabitation relationships as marriages?

No. When a couple cohabitates for the purpose of avoiding taxes or other obligations common to married people, we would regard the relationship as sinful and illegitimate (Romans 13:1-3). All responsibilities toward the partner, children, and government are regarded as obligations to be honored. We would urge the couple to marry, to seal their relationship within covenant, to honor God, and obey the civil authorities.

Men and women commonly cohabit with one another claiming that living together is more honest because a marriage license is merely a "piece of paper" that trivializes their love. The unspoken reality is that lifelong commitment to each other is not necessarily expected or desired. In this type of arrangement, children conceived in these relationships are forced to live and adapt to an environment deeply embedded with "self-ism." Though they are not told overtly, implied in the structure is a built-in exit plan. Legacy, inheritance, and family lineage are not cherished. Questions hang over the arrangement: Is it a marriage with moral and covenantal obligations or is it a mutual agreement to be used and then discarded when the going gets tough?

What constitutes the legitimate ending of a marriage?

Introduction:

Jesus rejected the "any cause" divorce that was common in his day (taught by the Hillelite Rabbis). But, he defended the true meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1. And there is one other surprising thing he

didn't reject: Jesus didn't reject the *other* ground for divorce in the Old Testament, which all Jews accepted.

Although the church forgot the other cause for divorce, every Jew in Jesus' day knew about Exodus 21:10-11, which allowed divorce for neglect. Before rabbis introduced the "any cause" divorce, this was probably the most common type. Exodus says that everyone, even a slave wife, had three rights within marriage – the rights to food, clothing, and love. If these were neglected, the wronged spouse had the right to seek freedom from that marriage. Even women could, and did, get divorces for neglect – though the man still had to write out the divorce certificate. Rabbis said he had to do it voluntarily, so if he resisted, the courts had him beaten till he volunteered!

These three rights became the basis of Jewish marriage vows- we find them listed in marriage certificates discovered near the Dead Sea. In later Jewish and Christian marriages, the language became more formal, such "love, honor, and keep." These vows, together with a vow of sexual faithfulness, have always been the basis for marriage. Thus, the vows we make when we marry correspond directly to the biblical grounds for divorce.

The three provisions of food, clothing, and love were understood literally by the Jews. The wife had to cook and sew, while the husband provided food and materials, or money. They both had to provide the emotional support of marital love, though they could abstain from sex for short periods. Paul taught the same thing. He said that married couples owed each other love (1 Cor. 7:3-5) and material support (1 Cor. 7:33-34). He didn't say that neglect of these rights was the basis of divorce because he didn't need to – it was stated on the marriage certificate. Anyone who was neglected, in terms of emotional support or physical support, could legally claim a divorce.

Divorce for neglect included divorce for abuse, because this was extreme neglect. There was no question about that end of the spectrum of neglect, but what about the other end? What about abandonment, which was merely a kind of passive neglect? This was an uncertain matter, so Paul deals with it. He says to all believers that they may not abandon their partners, and if they have done so, they should return (1 Cor. 7:10-11). In the case of someone who is abandoned by an unbeliever – someone who won't obey the command to return – he says that the abandoned person is "on longer bound."

Anyone in first-century Palestine reading this phrase would think immediately of the wording at the end of all Jewish, and most Roman, divorced certificates: "You are free to marry anyone you wish."

Putting all this together gives us a clear and consistent set of rules for divorce and remarriage. Divorce is only allowed for a limited number of grounds that are found in the Old Testament and affirmed in the New Testament:

- Adultery
- Emotional and Physical neglect
- Abandonment and abuse

Jewish couples listed these biblical grounds for divorce in their marriage vows. We reiterate them as love, honor, and keep, and be faithful to each other. When these vows were broken, it threatened to break up the marriage. As in a broken contract, the wronged party had the right to say, "I forgive you; let's carry on," or, "I can't go on, because this marriage is broken."

Therefore, while divorce should never happen, God allows it (and subsequent remarriage) when your partner breaks the marriage vows.

Biblical reasons for divorce:

1. **The death of a spouse:** (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-4).
2. **Adultery:** Under the old covenant, death was the means of ending an adulterous relationship (Deuteronomy 22:22). Luther and Calvin both considered the civil authority in Europe unbiblical in its refusal to exercise the biblical civil mandate that adultery was a capital crime. Therefore, Luther taught that the guilty adulterer or adulteress was as good as dead, so the innocent party was free to remarry.

We at South Mountain Community Church are bound by civil authority, which does not regard adultery as a capital offense. However, it should be sobering to us all to recognize the serious civil obligation God put Israel under on the matter. Adultery is a grievous sin and a profoundly serious matter. We agree with Jesus that adultery can be a reason for divorce, and also agree with him that "hardness of heart" is the real reason.

3. **Abandonment from the Non-Christian Spouse:** In the event that a non-Christian chooses to divorce their Christian spouse, the Christian is free to remarry in due course after the divorce is final. The Christian should not initiate divorcing a non-Christian, but should live graciously with their spouse to quietly represent Christ with an infectious demeanor, kindness, generosity, and service (1 Corinthians 7:15).
4. **Failure to love, honor, and cherish.** Unrepented sin that abuses the marriage mandate to love, honor, and cherish your spouse. See introduction. These behaviors include abuse, abandonment (ex: no interest in keeping the marriage covenant because of drug addiction, alcohol addiction, etc.). NOTE: this is in the case of unrepented sin.

SMCC will help couples work toward reconciliation through repentance.

What is the root sin?

1. **Adultery committed by a spouse:**
Adultery breaks faith, trust, and fidelity with the spouse to whom it was promised. Adultery, in absolute defiance of the Lord Jesus, places another person between the "one flesh" relationship, thereby causing division in that union. Adultery demeans, shames, and abandons the other for selfish gain. Adultery, by definition, selfishly hates the other and loves the forbidden.

Adultery can be a legitimate reason for seeking divorce by the betrayed husband or wife. However, reconciliation is the goal if the betraying spouse is repentant. Repentance means not only an abandonment of the cause of betrayal, but a turning toward one's partner with a new level of devotion and practice that improves the relationship. It is not a return to status quo. Reconciliation means to re-enter the relationship in such a way that both partners are changed and the marriage is richer and more resilient. Divorce is only the result of hardness of heart. Jesus left the identity of the one with a hard heart ambiguous, since it could be the betrayer or the betrayed, or even both (Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:5).

2. **Wide range of sexual sins (*porneia*):**
Much debate is generated over this word (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). It is used in combination with *moicheia* (Matthew 5:32), which some consider to be a literary device to emphasize adultery. Others take the words to speak of two categories of sin.
 - o ***Moicheia*** [moichao / moicei÷a]: to have romantic or sexual relations with a married man or woman not one's lawful spouse (adultery).
 - o ***Porneia*** [porneia / pornei÷a]: illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, fornication (sexual activity before marriage), homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals, incest.

We take the position that sexual deviancy in a broad range of sexual activity constitutes immorality (*porneia*), which is a violation of the covenant of marriage (Proverbs 2:16-17). It is a betrayal of one's spouse and of God's witness and ratification of the marriage.

3. **Treachery or treasonous betrayal:**
Marriage is entered with promises, sincerity, and assurances of safety, loyalty, and longevity until death terminates the marriage. Vows are given to be loyal to one's spouse through hardship (including financial trouble, relocation, social danger, physical and emotional sickness). Promises are made to nurture and build relationship, rather than allow marital disintegration through years of accommodation, lazy performance, self-seeking, and neglect.

Treachery is a breach of covenant that evaporates all "one-fleshness." Adultery and immorality violate the person and the covenant, since another person has come between and before the sole position of the spouse. God stands as witness and ultimate defender of the weak and innocent. Thus God says, "Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant...let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 'For I hate divorce,' says the LORD, the God of Israel" (Malachi 2:14-16, NASB).

In this biblical context God has withheld blessing because of Israel's immorality and adulterous behavior, and God's curse, not blessing, is on the betrayer as long as he will not repent.

4. **Hardness of heart:** Moses allowed divorce as concession to the hardness of heart in men and women. Hardness of heart violates two primary relationships simultaneously: relationship with the spouse and relationship with God. It is impossible to betray one's spouse and be rightly related to God at the same time (Matthew 19:8).

What will the elders of South Mountain Community Church do if my Christian spouse insists on divorcing me?

If a Christian initiates divorce, the elders will begin church discipline. An immediate intervention will be initiated to investigate the grievances and begin a mitigation process and counseling to bring about repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Mark 10:11-12; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, 27).

Does this mean women must endure abusive relationships?

No. Abuse is never tolerable in marriage or against family members, especially children or the elderly. Abuse is sinful violence and must be treated as such. Those being harmed must be removed from the environment that endangers them so they can know and experience safety. At the least, it means separation for a period of time, so that measured progress can be achieved by the violent partner. A "no tolerance of future harm" stance must be clearly understood and consistently demonstrated by the violent partner for reunion to occur.

At the worst, if trust is not recoverable, the harmed spouse must be respected to determine if they can or will reenter the relationship again.

Scripture does not address abuse as a legitimate reason for divorce. This issue becomes a judgment call on the part of the elders.

Domestic violence which is physical in nature will not be tolerated. Even though difficult to determine or measure, verbal or emotional abuse is also gravely harmful and always damaging. Emotional abuse will not be tolerated by South Mountain Community Church.

We submit to the State of Utah regarding domestic violence and sexual abuse of children, the infirm, or the elderly.

Each constitutes a severe breach of the marriage covenant which may end a marriage because of hardness of heart, thus SMCC leadership will encourage repentance and reconciliation.

Am I required to take back my spouse after they have committed adultery?

Whenever possible, reconciliation is the primary motivation behind our actions toward those who have done great harm to us (1 Corinthians 7:11). Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your father in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45).

How does one do this in practice? Doing good to the offending spouse will mean praying for God to deeply cut the offender to the bone of their resistance, so that there is no more opposition to change. Reconciliation

is not simply entering into relationship again as though nothing happened (Luke 17:3). It is not entrusting yourself to a betrayer who is likely to betray again. And it is not melting before whatever display of apology the betrayer can muster. Repentance is deep, life-changing remorse by the betrayer in the face of their depravity. It is the betrayer coming to the end of themselves and authentically turning toward those harmed to be permanently oriented toward blessing, not harming or neglecting, them.

Repentance is not simply an apology; in fact, an apology is merely an admission that one has been caught, want to be "let off the hook." Confession, not apology, is required (James 5:16). Confession spells out the offense in full.

Repentance is a well-considered path of measurable change that is demonstrated over time. As transformation is seen and confirmed, trust is regained. Restitution, where possible, is completed and reconciliation is begun with a better level of honesty, trust, and intimacy than existed before.

Repentance abandons all forms of violence (physical, which includes restraint, and standing in doorways; verbal, which is shouting, threats, demeaning ridiculing words; emotional, which can be subtle or over manipulation, and withholding.) It is a requirement on the part of the victim to forgive the offender when this authentic, long-lasting repentance is seen (Colossians 3:13).

If, however, there is no repentance, then there is no requirement to live together in the marriage (1 Cor. 7:10-11). The temptation, though, is to give up prematurely. It is to lose hope that the restoration could occur sometime in the future. Other times it is more sinister. It is being hardened by resentment and wanting to make the other person pay.

Can I remarry if my spouse dies?

Yes. The marriage covenant ends with the death of one's husband or wife. You are free to marry (1 Corinthians 7:39).

Can I remarry after divorcing an adulterer?

This is the most disputed issue on the topic of divorce and remarriage. On the face of it, Jesus and the apostle Paul made no allowance for remarriage.

- "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery." (Matthew 5:31- 32)
- "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9)
- He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:11-12)
- "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." (Luke 16:18)
- To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:10-11)

These statements by Jesus and Paul set the parameters for remarriage.

1. Jesus restricts the grounds for divorce to *moicheia* (adultery) or *porneia* (a broader net of sexual misconduct). Jesus speaks to the husband directly. If the husband is divorcing his wife, he is to give her a certificate of divorce, so she can remarry, rather than punish her by keeping her in a state of unsupported marriage. Jesus, in Luke 16:19, states that though an adulterous woman is given a certificate of divorce making it possible for her to remarry, the man who marries her commits adultery. The consequence of sexual sin is grave and not resolvable for the offending spouse, outside the mercy, forgiveness, and grace of the other spouse. Hardness of heart will demand punishment. Mercy and grace will work toward authentic repentance and restoration.
2. The innocent party of a divorce due to adultery may remarry. Remarriage after one has been betrayed by an adulterous spouse does not constitute adultery. The person marrying a previously married spouse who was the victim of an adulterous person also does not constitute adultery. This is implied but not specifically proscribed in Matthew 19:9. Scripture is clear: marriage is a covenant relationship that should not be broken even under extreme circumstances of betrayal such as adultery. It should be restored through repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Paul instructed members of the Corinthian church who separated from their spouses to remain unmarried, so reconciliation could occur. Reconciliation is the priority (1 Corinthians 7:10).

3. A believer who remarries after a non-Christian spouse divorces the believing spouse constitutes a legitimate marriage (1 Corinthians 7:15).
4. If divorce occurs before a person has surrendered his or her life to Christ, and an appropriate effort to restore the marriage has been undertaken without favorable results, remarriage is appropriate, so long as the believer marries a Christian.

Does this mean the innocent party should remain single indefinitely?

It means they should remain single for as long as every effort is applied to reconcile with their husband or wife. Though divorce and remarriage is intensely personal, the counsel and objectivity available through consultation with SMCC leaders will greatly increase the likelihood of avoiding impulsiveness (Proverbs 15:22; Hebrews 13:17).

If the offending spouse remarries, is there any obligation for me to remain single?

This is a matter of conscience as no further option is available to restore the marriage. Remarriage to a former husband or wife who since the divorce has been married to another person is clearly forbidden (Deuteronomy 24:3-4). In this case the innocent party would be free to remarry, provided that resentments and relational issues are resolved so they are not carried forward into the new marriage.

Are there other justifications for remarriage?

Jesus made it clear that marrying an adulterer or adulteress constitutes adultery. This means the one who is guilty of breaking faith and violating the covenant of marriage is committing himself or herself to a life of singleness. It is implicit that the innocent party may remarry, but the offender may not (Mark 10:10-12; Luke 16:18).

The leaders take a conservative stance on remarriage, which we believe agrees with Jesus. This means that the primary thrust of any effort is to bring about repentance in the offender, restoration of relationship, forgiveness by the offended, and mutual reconciliation of the marriage.

The leaders would not support remarriage unless the previous marriage ended because of the stubborn unrepentance of the adulterer/adulteress (*moicheia*), or immoral person (*porneia*), or because of violence by the spouse of the previous marriage.

Can I remarry if I divorced my spouse just because we were incompatible?

No. Work toward reconciliation, which means discovering what made you incompatible, and change. There are few legitimate reasons for divorce. Incompatibility is not one of them (1 Corinthians 7:10).

What if I divorced my spouse because of domestic violence, child abuse, or abandonment- can I remarry?

The Bible gives no direct instruction in these cases. However, the Bible is clear in this regard: a husband is responsible to love his wife, which means caring for her and protecting her from any harm. He is also responsible for the care and protection of his children. He must assure that no form of harm or exploitation comes to them (Ephesians 5:21-31).

SMCC leadership would hope every effort and sufficient time be allowed for the abusing spouse to repent. If no repentance was demonstrated, and reconciliation was improbable, remarriage would be permitted.

Some have used biblical teaching on wives submitting to their husband to force battered women to stay in their marriages. This is not our position. Physical harm to spouses or children is absolutely not acceptable.

What if I was divorced while a non-Christian?

Though marriage is a blessing given to all humanity and is to be honored as a binding covenant even when entered into before being in Christ, it is understood that the non-Christian is ignorant of God's decrees and expectations. Therefore, a non-Christian cannot be bound by the same expectations governing a Christian. The atonement Jesus achieved by His blood is sufficient to pay the penalty of previous sin. If the former spouse is a Christian, SMCC would encourage a pursuit of reconciliation and possible remarriage.

Am I eligible to assume leadership in the church if I have been divorced or remarried?

The highest offices in the church are elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Those who hold these offices do so because of their devotion to Christ, His call on their lives, their character, and their skill in leadership and service. They are responsible to conduct their lives in Christ so others may imitate them (Hebrews 13:7).

South Mountain Community Church will not accept a man who has left a covenant marriage between two Christians unless he pursues reconciliation to correct his sins. South Mountain Community Church will not accept an elder candidate who has been divorced and remarried as a believer unless there are extreme mitigating circumstances. Though we recognize that it is a high calling to request that a man remain unmarried until his previous spouse repents and reconciles, or is remarried, or dies, we want to encourage Christian men to treat their wives as our Lord Jesus Christ does His church (Ephesians 5:22-33) by conducting themselves like Hosea, who sought reconciliation to please God.

South Mountain Community Church will accept a man who was divorced as an unbeliever and has met all other biblical criteria for the office since his sins have been forgiven in Christ and he has become a new creation in a new covenant of grace with God.

If a potential elder is married to a woman who has had a divorce in the past, and her previous spouse is either remarried or has released her from their marriage bond prior to her remarriage to the potential elder we would accept the elder candidate's nomination. If the elder candidate's spouse's divorce occurred as an unbeliever or by the leaving of an unbeliever we would accept their covenant remarriage as biblical and deem the man as above reproach.

Concluding Remarks

There is unending biblical debate regarding the issue of divorce and remarriage. People wanting to justify sin will always find a way to vindicate themselves in their own mind. The elders recognize that there are many complicated factors and variables in each marriage and we will prayerfully and biblically seek wisdom as we judge each case on its own merits in light of the clear direction of Scripture.

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