

## **Biblical Understanding of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage at Immanuel Leidy's Church**

### **Purpose**

This document outlines the Biblical convictions of Immanuel Leidy's Church regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. It is intended as a pastoral guide to help foster healthy marriages, provide care amid brokenness, and clarify God's design for this sacred covenant. Formulated through prayerful study and discussion among the leadership, this statement reflects our desire to uphold Scripture while ministering with grace and truth.

We recognize the increasing cultural confusion surrounding marriage and the painful prevalence of divorce—even among professing believers. We aim to support strong, Christ-centered marriages, walk alongside those in difficult marital circumstances, and bring restoration wherever possible. This statement is not aimed at condemnation but at compassionate clarity. We affirm the sanctity of marriage, the hope of redemption, and the sufficiency of God's grace in all circumstances.

### **1. God's Design for Marriage**

God instituted marriage as a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6). It is not a human invention subject to cultural trends, personal preferences, or technological developments, but a divine institution established by God for His glory and our good.

Marriage was created for companionship (Genesis 2:18), fruitfulness (Genesis 1:28), mutual delight (Proverbs 5:18–19), and to serve as a living testimony of Christ's covenant love for His Church (Ephesians 5:22–33). Biblical marriage is a sacred, exclusive, and covenantal relationship involving three parties: God, the husband, and the wife. It is a binding promise of love, fidelity, and unity that reflects God's steadfast faithfulness to His people.

Because marriage is a divine ordinance, any union or sexual relationship that departs from this design is a distortion of God's good creation and a rejection of His revealed will. These distortions include but are not limited to same-sex unions, polygamy, polyamory, interfaith marriages (between believer and unbeliever), pedophilia, bestiality, pre-marital or extra-marital sexual activity, and artificial constructs such as AI-generated "relationships."

Scripture refers to these and other such acts under the broad category of *porneia*—sexual immorality—which is repeatedly condemned and prohibited throughout both the Old and New

Testaments. These boundaries are not arbitrary; they are gracious guardrails given by God to protect us physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and to preserve the holiness of His people.

Though marriage unites two sinners and no earthly marriage is perfect, Biblical marriage remains the God-ordained standard for all intimate human relationships. It is the only proper context for human sexuality and raising children, and it serves to display the Gospel in daily life. Christians, therefore, are called to honor God by upholding this design in their own lives and the life of the Church.

Scripture teaches that believers in Christ are not to marry unbelievers (Deuteronomy 7:3–4; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14). It is good and right for Christians to marry fellow believers—those who share a common faith in Christ and are committed to walking in obedience to His Word. Marriage is not merely a romantic or social contract, but a sacred covenant that reflects the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25–32). For this reason, entering into marriage with someone who does not share saving faith in Jesus is not only unwise but disobedient to God’s revealed will.

However, if someone is already married to an unbeliever, Scripture is equally clear that they should not seek a divorce simply because of that spiritual difference: *If any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband* (1 Corinthians 7:12–14).

In such cases, the believing spouse is called to live faithfully and pursue godliness within the marriage, serving as a witness to the unbelieving partner. Peter echoes this encouragement, saying that even without a word, an unbelieving spouse may be won over by the conduct of the believing partner (1 Peter 3:1–2). While the Bible warns against entering into unequally yoked marriages, it also offers hope and instruction for those already in such unions: remain faithful, live in a Christ-honoring way, and trust that God may use the faithful witness for the salvation of the spouse.

## **2. Qualifications for Marriage**

Marriage is not merely a social arrangement but a covenantal union designed to reflect Christ’s relationship with the Church (Ephesians 5:22–33); to unite with someone who is not in Christ undermines that God-ordained purpose and hinders spiritual unity.

For those desiring to be married at Immanuel Leidy’s Church, we require the following:

- Premarital counseling to foster a biblical understanding of marriage and prepare couples for a Christ-centered union.

- Repentance and restoration in cases involving premarital sexual sin or cohabitation, in keeping with the call to holiness (1 Cor. 6:18; Heb. 13:4).
- A public vow and covenantal commitment made before God and witnesses during the wedding ceremony.
- If an Immanuel Leidy's pastor is unavailable or another officiant is requested, that individual must affirm our Statement of Faith and our position papers on Marriage and Human Sexuality to officiate the ceremony.

### **3. Divorce: Biblical Grounds and Pastoral Wisdom**

While God's heart is always for reconciliation (Malachi 2:16), Scripture does permit divorce in limited circumstances due to the reality of sin and hard-heartedness (Matthew 19:8).

These grounds include:

- Sexual immorality (Matthew 5:32; 19:9): The Greek term *porneia* includes serious sexual sins such as adultery, incest, bestiality, and other forms of sexual uncleanness (Leviticus 20:10–16). Divorce in such cases is permitted, not prescribed. Repentance and reconciliation are always preferred, but the innocent party may pursue divorce where the guilty spouse is unrepentant or reconciliation is impossible. The innocent spouse can remarry on proper Biblical grounds, but only in the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:39).
- Abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15): When a spouse deserts the marriage and reconciliation is no longer possible, the believer is not bound in such cases.
- Separation between believers (1 Corinthians 7:10–11): In rare cases where two believing spouses cannot remain together, separation—not divorce—is permitted, with both parties remaining unmarried and chaste unless reconciliation occurs.

We affirm that these exceptions do not diminish the gravity of divorce nor make it a preferred option. Instead, they reflect God's mercy in a fallen world.

### **4. Restoration Through Repentance and Grace**

Divorce and remarriage apart from biblical grounds are not unpardonable sins. We affirm the power of the Gospel to bring about repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. True repentance involves confession to God and others as appropriate (Matthew 5:23–24; James 5:16), a changed life, and submission to Biblical counsel. When warranted, public acknowledgment of sin may occur in the context of church life under the guidance of the elders.

Forgiveness is extended in Jesus' name to the repentant. The church is responsible for pronouncing forgiveness and welcoming restored believers back into the body of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:5–8). Restoration may include renewal of marital vows, or in cases where reconciliation is no longer possible, acknowledging a non-Biblical remarriage with confession and seeking God's grace and mercy.

## 5. Remarriage

Remarriage is permissible in the following situations:

- After the death of a spouse (Romans 7:2–3).
- Following a Biblically permissible divorce where reconciliation is no longer possible (1 Corinthians 7:15).

We encourage discernment, prayer, and counsel before entering into any remarriage. While God offers complete forgiveness to the repentant (1 John 1:9), past sins do not nullify the need for wise, Spirit-led steps forward. Where remarriage has occurred in ways not aligned with Scripture, the goal is not further dissolution but confession, forgiveness, and faithful Christian living within the current marriage.

## 6. The Role of the Church in Marriages

We take seriously our responsibility to shepherd the flock (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1–3) and call members to live under the authority of God’s Word. We desire to come alongside couples with encouragement, exhortation, and restoration.

In cases of struggling marriages:

- We urge private and communal accountability (Matthew 18:15–17).
- We will lead and guide couples toward repentance, reconciliation, and renewal.
- If a spouse remains in unrepentant sin and the church determines biblical grounds for separation, the offended party may be released (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Our ultimate hope is not in perfect marriages but in the perfect grace of Christ. Every believer, whether married, single, divorced, or remarried, is called to walk in holiness, forgiveness, and hope.

## Conclusion

At Immanuel Leidy’s Church, we uphold the sacredness of marriage and the mercy of God for the brokenhearted. We long to see Gospel-centered marriages flourish and to provide compassionate care to those who have experienced marital failure. In all things, we strive to speak the truth in love, pointing each person to the grace and restoration available in Jesus Christ.

*Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.*