



MARRIAGE & SEXUALITY



SEXUALITY

We believe that the sexual ethic within Scripture is clear: physical intimacy and sexual love is to be expressed solely between a husband and a wife. More than a physiological component, sex was foremost given, by God as a sign and expression of two people in covenant with each other. Sexual intercourse is as much spiritual as it is physical.

Beyond an act of procreation, sex, ultimately was given as a sign in order for humanity to understand how deeply God desires to know His people. This can be seen most specifically throughout the Old Testament as the God consistently speaks of His desire to “know” His people. This word “know” is the Hebrew equivalent to sexual union between a man and woman. In a similar way, sex was additionally given to experientially understand the depth of pleasure we can find in Him. When a human engages in sexual activity, how ever pleasurable it can be, it is but a shadow of the pleasure that is found in relationship with God (Psalms 16).

When a married couple engages in sexual love, they are doing so first in service to each other; thus making the act of sex not about themselves, but about pleasuring their partner. Sexual love is then positioned in marriage as an act of service to each other. This is why Paul addresses the married couples to not withhold their own bodies from each other, except for a spiritual fast. It is within these ideas of physical intimacy being a service to each other, that solo-sex (masturbation) while not found explicitly in Scripture, violates the spirit of Love and sex. Solo-sex declares that physical intimacy can be found on one’s own accord, not giving anything to anyone, but taking something from someone (when accompanied by impure thoughts or images). Thus the Scriptural model is for sexual love to be found solely in the boundaries of a faithful covenant.

Secondly, as the couple engages in physical intimacy they do so as a sign to themselves that ultimately all pleasure is found in God not in the things of this earth. When sexuality is pursued outside of the Scriptural ethic, the individual declares that not only can pleasure be found outside of God, but also pleasure in that exact creation of God is found outside of His parameters.

In the current cultural climate, issues of sexual identity and same gender attraction have become a centerpiece of conversation within the American Church specifically. We believe that regardless of ones attraction (same or opposite gender) all believers are called to live out a Biblical sexual ethic. Scripture gives no example where homosexuality is condoned and in multiple places is clearly spoken to be outside of the natural bounds of human nature (Romans 1) and are actions that are completely contrary to the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6). With that being stated, we believe the attraction itself is not sinful; rather, it is the acting upon those feelings that is sinful. In these cases, their sexuality becomes an area of discipleship under the authority of Scripture, in the same manner that any heterosexual would have to in their life as well.

Thus we fully believe that any individual can stand justified before our Heavenly Father, whole hearted followers of Jesus Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit in operation of all of the charismata and have attraction to those of the same gender.



We encourage our members to practice chastity and live a life of purity in all phases of their life: single or married. Specially, if an engaged couple is having sex prior to marriage, we at NLC do not believe it appropriate for that couple to continue down the path of marriage until they have separated and walked in sexuality purity for a season of time.

Finally, we believe that the NT is abundantly clear, the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is given to mankind that they might be fully transformed: no matter how dark of life they lived prior. No sin is greater in the eyes of God and no sin is too dark that His light cannot reach and change. Paul's word to a sinful and sexually broken world ring true today, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6.11).

MARRIAGE COVENANT

The issue of Covenant stands at the center of the Triune God's nature and His interactions with mankind. In like manner all human covenant's are to mirror that which is seen by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As such, God is deeply focused on the sacredness of marriage and as His children and Jesus' Bride it is our honor and obligation to share this high view. In an ever increasing secular culture where sexuality and marriage are consistently being redefined, the time for the Church to stand firm in the goodness of God's plan for marriage is now. As a result of this shifting cultural atmosphere and the high frequencies of marriages ending in divorce, we, as New Life Church are compelled to re-establish for our family of believers a Biblical view of sexuality, marriage, divorce and remarriage.

The Bible teaches (Matthew 19, Genesis 2) that God, in His creation of Adam and Eve as husband and wife, designed marriage to be lifelong, covenantal, monogamous, and between male and female only. Genesis states that Adam and Eve would become "One Flesh" and Matthew records Jesus declaring that God Himself is the One who oversees the marriage and causes the man and woman to become one flesh. In Jesus' own statement, He shows that marriage was fundamentally a divine union and idea, not simply a sociological construct. At its center, marriage was uniquely created by God for the display of His love and glory to an unredeemed world. Moreover, a marriage covenant is a portrait of God's unending love to His people, Jesus' love for His Church, and how the Church is to be devoted to Christ in return.

DIVORCE

There are few life experiences that are more painful or destructive to the person or society than divorce. Divorce is a spiritual and emotional cancer to both the family unit as a whole and the individuals within those families. Thus it is not unexpected to find that God hates it. First, God hates divorce because He loves people and He hates anything that causes that kind of pain to His children. Secondly, God hates divorce because it erodes the testimony of unity that the Gospel brings to people's lives. Finally, God hates divorce because it destabilizes the healthiness of the Church and ultimately neutralizes the Church's ability to minister to an already broken world. Just as the pain of divorce permeates our culture, it likewise effects the church, and so with compassionate hearts, we weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn who have walked and/or are in the midst of divorce. There are no winners when a divorce happens



and given the incredible emotional pain involved with divorce, we desire to be clear yet completely loving when sharing our convictions.

Our desire is to be simultaneously faithful to God's Word and loving to God's people. We do not believe that these two items are ever inconsistent with each other. In alignment with the core values of our church family, we are a church built on the Word of God and yet apply those truths in a manner that honors the Spirit of Grace.

It is the belief of New Life Church, that divorce was never intended to be part of God's design for the family or society. While God hates divorce, He does not hate divorcees. Divorce will never be God's best for anyone and we believe that anyone who loves God and knows of His goodness would never consider it without broad input from their Biblical community and counsel from their spiritual leadership.

While divorce is not the unforgivable sin and there is unmerited mercy found in the work of Jesus, divorce is a result of sin and hardness of heart (Matthew 19). Jesus' commentary on Moses' certificate of divorce was such that though in certain cases it is permissible it was due to the lack of forgiveness. Even in a situation where divorce is necessary to protect individuals from danger or abuse, divorce should be walked out as an act of love.

The beginning of any discussion of possible situations that might allow for a couple to divorce, is only after the married couple has made every effort to resolve marital strife because of a deep conviction that reconciliation is in Heaven's plan A. We recognize that any restoration of a marriage depends on two tender hearts wanting to reconcile. Just as we never encourage anyone to rush into marriage but to weigh the gravity of covenant they are making, we likewise never encourage anyone to rush out of marriage. Forgiveness and reconciliation are at the center of the heart of the Gospel and the purpose of the Church.

With that as a foundation, after much study, thought, prayer, dialogue and debate, the leadership of New Life Church believe's we as a community are to handle the issue of divorce (and subsequently remarriage) as follows:

Sexual Immorality

Jesus cites sexual immorality (porneia) as the "permission clause" for Moses' certificate of divorce (Matthew 19:3-9). However, the spirit of Jesus' words does not place sexual immorality as a clearly defined loophole by which divorce is allowed as an appropriate action for an offended Christ follower. Certainly not without first walking through attempts of reconciliation and forgiveness if true repentance is present.

In the same manner that God's gracious covenant of love overcomes Israel's infidelity (Jeremiah 3) and is steadfast despite Israel's constant infidelity (Hosea 2). It is this kind of love and faithfulness to marriage covenant that is to be modeled by God's people. In doing so, this kind of love has the ability to overcome the incredible pain and hurt of infidelity within a marriage. Therefore, in a scenario where a spouse has been unfaithful, we are committed to walk out reconciliation with the couple and family. Specifically, counsel with the faithful spouse to uphold the sacredness of the marriage covenant and to grant forgiveness and reconciliation. Additionally, to the spouse who caused the infidelity we



will pastor through the heart issues leading up to the affair as we look for a restoration of the marriage by calling the unfaithful spouse to be reconciled first to God then to their spouse. To the family caught in the wake of such a storm, we will provide a safe place for the children to gain care and love.

Abandonment

A loving marriage consisting of two Christ-followers committed to each other is always the Biblical model. Hardened hearts cannot support a marriage longterm; specifically, it is not uncommon for one spouse to have a hard heart in the midst of a “mixed” marriage (i.e., one composed of a believing and an unbelieving spouse). If one spouse walks away from the marriage and refuses to engage in any kind of reconciliation of any kind, divorce maybe a result; though not the preferable end.

Abuse

It is never our counsel to recommend to a spouse to stay physically present in a physically abusive situation. Additionally, where there is physical abuse and physical danger to the children within the home, protective care is required. Additionally, physical and emotional abusiveness, which are equally damaging to the status of the family is treated in the same way. When there is obvious danger existing for either a spouse or child, we fully support the application of all appropriate means to bring the abuse to an immediate end; this to include separation, police action, or court orders. When all means of Biblical mediation have been deployed and yet are rejected by the unrepentant spouse, the abused spouse may allow for divorce.

REMARRIAGE

There is a diversity of convictions and ideas on the issue of divorce and remarriage among of theologians and students of Scripture. As a Church we are continually weigh the message of both grace, restoration how to best honor Jesus and glorify God in our convictions on this issue. In general we believe our call as a church is one to a “ministry of reconciliation.” This extends to every aspect of disunity among people, ethnic groups, social classes, as well as marriages.

Before one asks when/if remarriage after divorce is Scripturally permissible, one must first ask if reconciliation from the prior marriage is a viable option. Within the most heartbreaking situations of sexual immorality or the most perplexing occurrences of abandonment; as long as the former spouse has not remarried or is not deceased, we believe that reconciliation should be the first conversation. If there is a season where the possibility of a reconciliation with the past spouse exists, we believe it best aligns with the GodHead’s intent of marriage that one should remain single or be reconciled in marriage to the ex-spouse.

In the case of reconciliation of a past marriage not being possible, freedom to remarry maybe permissible in view of a number of scenarios: 1. The marriage was prior to a salvation experience with Christ or the individual was the faithful spouse (from the prior marriage: both in fidelity and physical or emotional safety). Secondly, the individual’s life is evident of clear transformation and maturation in their spiritual walk. Additionally, in either case real remorse should be present by the individual seeking remarriage.



Given the great difficulty of absolute dogma on any issue, we extend grace and honor the individual believer's right to understand God's revealed Word as God speaks to them. We ask that grace and understanding be expressed toward our church's position and conviction, just as we extend and offer that to our brothers/sisters who may come to different conclusions than us. pray that the love, care, sensitivity and humility we have sought in coming to these conclusions be evident to all who read it and specially to those who are affected by our leadership.

We are in a state of gratitude and humility that the love of a Father sent His Son to a cross for our sin and His Spirit opened our eyes and heart to receive that free gift. Christ's filled cross and empty tomb is sufficient to cover all of our sin and empower us to walk out lives in alignment to the Kingdom of Heaven.

May His Spirit continually guide us into all truth.