

have been divorced and remarried. In some cases, the divorce and remarriage were clearly acts of disobedience toward the Lord. In most of those cases, that disobedience has been confessed to the Lord. No stigma remains concerning their place in the body of Christ or in the local church. Some were married and divorced and remarried, all before they were converted to Jesus Christ. Some, as believers, had tried everything possible to restore the marriage, but it failed anyway. After a period of time, they decided to remarry. Our intent is not to judge the past. We leave these matters to the individuals involved. God has called us to an obedient relationship toward him. He has called us to a clear conscience. For these, if reconciliation is impossible, and they desire to marry a believer, and they can do so with confidence that what they are doing is consistent with Scripture, we do not judge them. However, we reserve the right not to participate in the wedding ceremony. Some will disagree with this position and may be offended at the refusal of the staff to perform the ceremony. Again, our intent is to reflect the permanence and significance of marriage and to be consistent with what we understand in Scripture. In the final analysis, it is more important that we please God than that we please men.

Revised March 2018

## Excerpt from The Constitution and By-laws of Lakeview Church ratified April 13, 2014.

### Marriage and the Home

- a. Marriage is a sacred institution ordained by God and is an indissoluble union of one husband (born male) and one wife (born female) until parted by death. Marriage is the foundation of the family. A believer should not be united in marriage with an unbeliever.
- b. Pastors and parents have an obligation to teach the sanctity of marriage and to warn against believers being yoked with unbelievers. Pastors should not knowingly officiate at the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever.
- c. Pastors are forbidden from encouraging, blessing, or officiating same-sex “marriages” or unions.

### Divorce

- Divorce is viewed in the Scripture as contrary to God's will. Christians shall seek by forbearance and forgiveness to preserve the marriage bond. Persons divorced and remarried who give evidence of being genuinely born again are eligible to be received into membership of the church. Divorce between members of the church is an occasion of great tragedy. Such conduct brings the teaching and reality of Christian reconciliation under reproach and offenders are to be disciplined. Pastors are to refrain from performing marriage ceremonies where one or both parties are divorced.

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Wedding Policies

The desire to marry and to have the ceremony in the church, performed by a pastor, is very common. Regularly the pastoral staff of Lakeview Church is asked to officiate in the weddings of members, attendees, acquaintances of Lakeview Church people and sometimes people with no apparent connection to this local church ministry. The purpose of this policy statement is to draw some specific guidelines for the participation of the Lakeview Church pastoral staff in wedding ceremonies.

The wedding may involve two believers, one believer, and one non-believer, or two non-believers. The Scripture clearly prohibits the marriage of a believer and a non-believer (2 Corinthians 6:14ff). It would be inappropriate for the staff to knowingly participate. To perform a wedding between two people who have no commitment to Jesus Christ is at best awkward. Much of the ceremony centers around the relationship of the husband and wife, drawing analogies to Christ and His church. We are, in effect, invoking the blessing of God on a couple that is spiritually separated from God. What fellowship does light have with darkness? If the man and woman to be married are not committed to Jesus Christ, then the pastoral staff of Lakeview Church is not to participate.

The third situation, involving two believers, will be considered by the pastoral staff. However, there are still some specific issues to resolve. If the man and woman desiring to be married, have never been married, or one or both is widowed, the staff may participate. 1 Corinthians speaks clearly concerning this. It is expected that the couple will be sexually pure before marriage. If the couple is living together

prior to marriage, the staff will not participate. To claim to be believers while openly and intentionally disobeying God's design demonstrates attitudes and values that will lead to serious trouble in the marriage.

The matter of divorce and remarriage creates the greatest dilemma. There are many opinions by Bible-believing people. Our intent is not to unjustly judge those who disagree. Neither is it to suggest that we have the infallible word on this issue. Our intent is to accomplish the following:

We believe that marriage is a God-ordained institution. God intended that marriage should last a lifetime. Therefore, we want to stress the significance of marriage. When a couple chooses to marry, they must understand that marriage is a lifetime commitment, not a trial relationship.

We desire to be consistent with Scripture. If we are unsure, we intend to apply the more narrow application rather than the more liberal application.

This policy is not necessarily a judgment on those who disagree. We are making every effort to remember that God is both gracious and forgiving. We need to do the same. However, we are attempting to have the same attitude toward marriage that God communicates in the Scripture.

Divorce occurs for any and every reason. Sometimes a spouse deserts the other. Sometimes the marriage is destroyed by an adulterous affair. Sometimes marriages are broken because the couple can no longer

communicate. Whatever the problem, the result is a tragedy. We believe that God desires and is able to mend broken marriages. It may happen. It may not. Our objective is to do whatever we can to encourage reconciliation. To participate in a wedding ceremony with divorced people when reconciliation is still possible is to deny by practice what we claim to believe in theory. Therefore, we choose not to participate in a wedding ceremony when it involves divorce that has even the remotest potential for reconciliation.

Often the pastoral staff is requested to perform a wedding ceremony with either one or both of the participants as the "innocent victims" of a broken marriage. Frequently, the former spouses have already remarried, making reconciliation impossible. It is common to apply Matthew 5 and 19 to these situations as examples of the "exception clause" mentioned by Jesus. This might be possible, but it is debatable. The staff and the church leadership do not wish to judge those who hold this position, but in order to apply the strictest meaning of the text; we have chosen not to perform ceremonies involving divorced people. (for a fuller explanation, see J. Carl Laney, *The Divorce Myth*).

Some may wish to by-pass the Lakeview pastoral staff and find another licensed minister to solemnize the wedding, using this facility. The church facilities are sometimes rented to other churches or groups. It is the general belief that when someone is married at this facility it does reflect our approval of the marriage. Therefore, the same policy applies regardless of who performs the ceremony.

Lakeview Church is made up of many who