

# H4

## STATEMENT ON SINGLENES AND MARRIAGE

### God's Intent

God created us to reflect His image individually and together in community, expressing our unity in diversity (Genesis 1:26–27). As a result, we flourish in intimate relationship with God and one another (Genesis 1:27–31; 2:25).

Singleness is a good gift from God as seen in the life of Jesus. It is an opportunity for focused communion with God, community with others, and service for God's purposes (Genesis 2:15; Matthew 12:46–50; 1 Corinthians 7:25–35).

Marriage is also a good gift from God for companionship, sexual intimacy, and procreation (Genesis 1:28, 2:24) where one man and one woman are joined together in a lifelong and exclusive holy covenant before God (Malachi 2:14–16; Matthew 19:4–6; Hebrews 13:4). Marriage mirrors the unique relationship between God and his people (Ezekiel 16:8; Malachi 2:14–16; Ephesians 5:22–33). The best foundation, and God's intent, is that married individuals be united in their faith (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Whether we are single or married, Jesus empowers us by His grace to live fulfilled lives in relational intimacy with God and others (John 10:10; Romans 15:13; Philippians 4:10–13; Hebrews 4:15–16; 1 Peter 2:21).

### Our Fallenness

Sin separates us from God and distorts intimacy (Genesis 3:8). Instead of serving others in covenantal relationship, we may use others for selfish ends. Any sexual activity outside the marriage covenant between a man and a woman violates God's boundaries and carries sober warnings and consequences (Romans 1:21–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:3–4). Failure to embrace God's intent for singleness and marriage may lead to apathy, discontent, sexual sin, or hasty divorce.

Within the faith community, we have also devalued singleness and treated divorced individuals with less respect. We repent where we have failed in these ways and grieve with those we have hurt by our actions. As ambassadors for Christ, we have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16–21). Christ has unbounded love toward us, no matter our past, and such love becomes the force behind our ministry.

We are committed to upholding and living out God's intent for relationships and supporting those who desire to pursue holiness.

### Divorce and Remarriage

The redemptive power of Jesus can heal hurting people, strained relationships, and damaged marriages. Since God holds marriage in high regard, we seek to protect and nurture these relationships (Hebrews 13:4). Divorce causes significant pain and fails to reflect God's design; it should not be considered until reasonable efforts, with the help of the church and trusted Christian leaders, prove unsuccessful (Malachi 2:16; Matthew 19:4–8).

At times relationships can become so broken that divorce becomes an option, such as when a spouse is guilty of sexual unfaithfulness, abandonment, or significant abuse (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15; cf. Exodus 21:10–11). In such cases, singleness or remarriage can provide newfound hope and community. Remarriage is also permitted after the death of a spouse (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39) or when the parties made no profession of faith prior to the time of the divorce (1 Corinthians 7:15).

The complexity of divorce and remarriage has touched many lives today. Whether we were wounded by a trusted spouse or our own sin, God's grace brings us together on a journey toward healing, forgiveness, and freedom. Together we cling to the promise that any sin can be forgiven (1 John 1:9).

### Our Hope

In the new heaven and new earth, people will neither be married nor given in marriage (Matthew 22:30) but will exist in perfect community together with God (John 14:1–3; Revelation 21:1–4). Ultimately, marriage foreshadows the glory of heaven when there is but one Bride, the Church, and one groom, the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 5:31–32; Revelation 19:7–9).

Until then we are led by God's Word, forgiven by God's Son, and empowered by God's Spirit as we reflect His image together in community.

*Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear (fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people). Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:7–9).*