

Marriage/Divorce/Remarriage

Marriage:

We believe the teaching of Scripture both OT and NT is that God's intention for marriage is that it is for as long as both husband and wife are both alive. Marriage is a covenant, individually made and based on vows, not performance, with God as the witness. The theological and sociological implications of life-long marriages are profoundly important for the individual, the family, the church and the community.

We believe the church is to use its collective influence to encourage and support life-long marriages.

Offering God's grace through honoring the Scripture, the pastoral staff of Southern Gables will diligently strive to meet the following goals and adhere to the following guidelines regarding weddings.

1. We will offer and require six sessions of premarital counseling and two sessions of post-wedding counseling for all couples wishing to be married at SGC or by a member of the SGC staff. (See #7 below)
2. The eight-session premarital counseling shall include an "inventory" tool designed to determine some of the content of the pre-marital counseling. ("Prepare" is one such tool).
3. All weddings must be between acknowledged and practicing Christians. Exceptions may be made when neither party is a Christian but are in need of the influence of a pastor and church and in such cases evangelism shall be the ultimate objective.
4. Marriages of the previously married can only be performed if no previous spouse of either party is able and willing to be reconciled.
5. Marriage will only be performed if the couple is willing to forego sexual intimacy until marriage.
6. Courtships shorter than one year (two years in the case of those previously married) will be discouraged.
7. Most pre-marital counseling will be performed by trained, mature, godly and long-married couples.
8. SGC will provide on-going marriage enrichment opportunities.

(Exceptions to the above policy may be made with consensus of the pastors and Elders of SGC)

Divorce and Remarriage:

Because God "hates divorce" and because of the devastating effects of divorce we believe the church is to use its collective influence, including church discipline, to discourage separation and dissolution.

We recognize that due to the “hardness of heart” estrangement and “divorce” do occur.

We believe the reconciliation of divorced and/or estranged partners is best and should be highly encouraged and supported.

Where reconciliation is not possible because one party is remarried or is unwilling to be reconciled, the other is “not bound” and may remarry – though in the case of one with an unmarried and unrepentant former spouse, remaining single and available for reconciliation should be seriously considered.

Relevant Scripture passages for study:

Genesis 2:20-25 “Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Malachi 2:13-16 Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

Matthew 5:31-32 “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 19:4-9 “Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

1 Corinthians 7:10-16 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. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with

her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

1 Corinthians 7:39-40 "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is--and I think that I too have the Spirit of God."