

JICC: POSITION PAPER

Marriage & Remarriage

We acknowledge that the subject of divorce and remarriage is challenging both in its Scriptural understanding and practical application. We also recognize that people come to faith in Christ and into fellowship of the local church at various levels of maturity and having experienced diverse teaching on this subject.

This brief document has been created to give clarity in Biblical interpretation and application. We acknowledge that it is insufficient in answering every question or addressing the nuances of every situation. Responses in these areas require prayerful discernment, patience, pastoral care, and wise counsel. This is why God calls us to walk together in the community and care of a local church.

JICC Statement of Faith - *Marriage*

Both man and woman were created in God's image, equal as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood. These distinctions are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should be honored and celebrated within the Church. Biblical Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime; such uniting serves to fundamentally and profoundly depict the relationship of Christ and His Bride, the Church. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, laboring sacrificially to provide for, protect, and lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:23-32)

Guidelines for Marriage

A believer is only permitted to marry another believer.¹

Marriage of two believing individuals is the only basis for a Christian Marriage. Therefore, it is advised that those seeking marriage have spent time cultivating their personal spiritual development through a local church where members of the body can affirm the fruit of their salvation and their preparedness for marriage.

¹ 2 Corinthians 14:15

Death of a Spouse

Since death breaks the marriage bond, remarriage is permissible without sin for a believing widow or widower, if the marriage is with another believer.²

Allowances for Divorce

God hates divorce.³ Divorce is always the result of sin, but not all divorce is sinful.

Divorce may be permitted when a spouse commits sexual immorality (Greek word: *porneia*), deserts the relationship, or is dangerously abusive. We recognize that perpetual unrepentant abuse is a form of desertion of the marriage. Such determinations should be made with sober mindedness, counsel, and affirmation from The Elders.⁴

Hope of Reconciliation

We recognize that even though Scripture speaks of allowances for divorce, the significance of the covenant of marriage and the ability for God to transform anyone who is truly repentant means that the hope of reconciliation must never be lost.⁵

We also recognize that there is a distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation. An aggrieved spouse can offer forgiveness to the grieving partner who has sinned against them. But the process of reconciliation involves repentance on the part of the one who has committed sin before any reconciliation can be pursued. Biblical repentance involves a contrite heart before God, humility before others, and a change in behavior.

In cases where sin has been repeated over extended periods of time, then it is also important for those spouses walking out repentance to do so for an extended period of time in order to demonstrate their sincerity.⁶ This process requires prayerful discernment and care from church leadership and members.

² Romans 7:2-3, 1 Corinthians 7:39

³ Malachi 2:16

⁴ Matthew 19:9, 1 Corinthians 7:11-15

⁵ Matthew 18:21-22, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

⁶ Matthew 3:8, 17:15-20

In Situations of Abuse

If someone finds themselves in an abusive situation, they are encouraged to immediately seek help.⁷

We recognize that some situations require immediate separation in order to protect the abused person. In this type of separation, the church's objective for the aggrieved spouse is that they are in a place of immediate safety in order to begin to receive personal healing. Our main objective for the spouse that is sinning is for the church to call them to repentance and for that spouse to respond humbly to that call.

On Separation

Physical separation under wise counsel can be very fruitful in providing the environment necessary to bring personal healing and healing to the marriage. This should be done under the care and counsel of church leaders and within the support of the church family.⁸

On Seeking Help

Our church has people designated to assist in the care of these matters. Any member or attender needing care is encouraged to contact an elder, home group leader, or ministry team leader to assist in discerning next steps. We partner with local counselors, nonprofit organizations, and local authorities for care and counseling of individuals in marital crisis.

Allowances for Remarriage

In cases where divorce is not biblically warranted, any subsequent marriage (other than remarriage to the original spouse) results in adultery.⁹

In the case of marital unfaithfulness, remarriage is permitted as long as it is with another believer.

In the case of repeated abuse where the aggrieving spouse is unrepentant, they may be deemed by The Elders to be an unbeliever who has deserted the marriage, therefore freeing the aggrieved person to remarry.

⁷ A list of care protocols are mentioned in another document more extensively, but to briefly summarize: Where immediate safety is needed, we encourage you to call 911 or contact My Sisters House (a local organization specializing in domestic violence) at 843-273-4673.

⁸ We recognize the value of mental health professionals like therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists and we refer regularly to them. But we also recognize the limitations that exist within such professional relationships. Mental health professionals are not a substitute for the care, authority, and relational accountability of the local church, and therefore decisions regarding separation, divorce, and remarriage should be made with council and support of the church.

⁹ Matthew 19:19

Admonition for Those Already Remarried

For those who are already remarried following an unbiblical divorce, you should remain with your current spouse and be faithful to the covenant that you made with them. You should still follow Biblical repentance and forgiveness for past sins and take steps towards personal healing and relational healing for anyone affected by those past sins.

Statement on Conscience

We acknowledge, particularly in the area of remarriage, that the church makes allowances that could be contrary to the conviction and conscience of some individuals. Therefore, there will be moments where a leader or individual in the church cannot - in good conscience - officiate, attend, or affirm a remarriage. We honor the individual freedom of that church member while also asking that they seek to walk graciously with the larger church family -- understanding the corporate convictions and practices outlined in this document.