

AUTUMN RIDGE CHURCH MARRIAGE STATEMENT

From the beginning, God instilled marriage with sacred significance and purpose. As a church that loves God and serves people, we desire to clearly proclaim God's design for marriage and to affirm our commitment to that singular design.

Marriage is the first human relationship created and ordained by God (Genesis 2) and is intended to be life giving and lifelong. In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus said: "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female. . . . 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 flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." When a couple makes and consummates their vows, the main actor is not a husband, a wife or a pastor, but God who joins them as one.

Marriage has both spiritual and practical importance and is beneficial in many ways. Surveys and studies consistently link marriage to happiness, longevity and even wealth. Spiritually, what God ordained for Adam and Eve not only created something special for them, but foreshadowed Christ's relationship with the church: "This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church." Ephesians 5:32. Marriage mirrors the relationship between Christ and his church. The church is his spiritual body. Christ loves his church because it is part of himself. So Paul writes, "In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Ephesians 5:28.

We therefore affirm that God designed marriage to be the physical and spiritual union joining one man and one woman in a lifelong and exclusive relationship. We find nothing in Scripture that indicates God has modified or altered this design for marriage; but we find much in Scripture to commend God's beautiful design. God intends the marriage relationship as the only safe, secure and sanctified relationship for sexual intimacy to occur between a man and a woman. No other relationship is a biblical marriage and no other relationship was intended by God to serve as a place for sexual intimacy.

We further and gratefully affirm that God offers redemption and restoration to those who have not followed God's design for marriage and sexual intimacy. All who confess and forsake their sin, seek forgiveness and mercy through Jesus Christ, will find compassion, love, kindness, acceptance, respect, and dignity from Christ and from Autumn Ridge Church.

By this Statement, the elders of Autumn Ridge Church reaffirm their commitment to the union of one man and one woman as the only marriage ordained by God and commended to humankind by Scripture.

Approved by Board of Elders
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