

K3C Marriage and Divorce Policy

PREAMBLE

The Marriage and Divorce Policy is intended to help the saints at Kileleshwa Covenant Community Church (K3C) to live out faithfully the truths of God's Word with respect to Marriage. It is hoped that these truths will be applied consistently in our households and further in and through the contexts of ministry in our church. Our desire is that it is implemented relationally and pastorally with grace and truth.

A. Definition of a Christian Marriage

Marriage is a sacred, lifelong, monogamous covenant between a man and a woman instituted by God and publicly entered into and is consummated by sexual intercourse.

Sacred; - embodying the laws or doctrines of the Christian faith (Hebrews 13:4)

Lifelong; - lasting or remaining until death separates (Matthew 19: 1 - 10)

Monogamous; Marrying and remaining faithful to the one person till death (Matthew 19: 1 - 10)

Covenant; A bond sealed by two parties vowing, often by oath, that each, having equal privileges and responsibilities, would carry out their assigned roles (Ephesians 5)

Publicly: In the presence of two or more witnesses (2 Corinthians 13:1)

Between a man and a woman; Heterosexual in nature and to be consummated (Genesis 2)

In so far as is possible, marriage being a public profession of commitment with legal standing, marriage ought to be celebrated publicly and must be overseen by a licensed person.

B. God's purpose for Marriage

1. Glorifying God

As Genesis 1:26-27 notes, God's first purpose for creating mankind in marriage was to mirror His image on earth. The Hebrew word for "mirror" means to reflect God, to magnify, exalt, and glorify Him. Marriage should reflect God's image to a world that desperately needs to see who He is. Because we're created in the image of God, people who wouldn't otherwise know what God is like should be able to look at married believing people and get a glimpse.

This is not to say that God is married but rather that the marriage covenant shows forth His Glory.

2. To experience companionship and complement each other;

God saw that it was not good for the man to be alone, and He chose to make a helper suitable for him (Genesis 2:18). The woman was thus created to fill the office of helper and companion. Having said that, In the Lord, woman is not independent of man nor is man independent of woman (1 Corinthians 11:11). Both are complementary to each other, and together are better than one (as Ecclesiastes 4:9 says).

3. To multiply a godly legacy;

The first charge that God declares to the man and woman is to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28). The blessing of the married is both to bring forth children and to know God and make Him known via discipling the next generation into faith in God (Psalm 78:4-7)

C. Marriages at K3C

- (i) Kenyan law recognizes the following forms of marriage:
 - a. Customary
 - b. Christian
 - c. Islamic
 - d. Hindu
 - e. Civil

- (ii) Whereas these are legal forms of marriage, some of these may not be consistent with marriage as set out in scripture. K3C will conduct marriages between people of opposite genders professing the Christian faith, who voluntarily (without duress or otherwise) have decided to get married and who have gone through the requisite pre – marital counseling.

- (iii) K3C will not conduct a marriage ceremony in the following circumstances:
 - a. Where one of the parties is not a professing Christian (2 Corinthians 6:14 and Amos 3:3)
 - b. A union that will create a polygamous state for either party (Matthew 19).
 - c. A union other than one between a man and a woman (Matthew 2).
 - d. A person who has been divorced for any reason other than adultery and whose spouse remains alive (Matthew 19).

Administrative Procedure for Couples intending to marry at K3C (further details to be provided for in procedures)

K3C recommends that those considering marriage should take ample time for wedding preparation. At a minimum, the following steps must be undertaken:

1. Collect and fill in the K3C Marriage Application Form, available at the church office. This form has to be filled separately by each individual intending on getting married.
2. Undertake premarital counseling at K3C or at another church/ministry that is acceptable to the pastoral leadership at K3C.
3. Comply with procedures prescribed by the Government of Kenya for marriage (including applying at the State Law Office to register your intended marriage at least 21 days before the intended ceremony).

D. Divorce & Remarriage

1. Definition of Divorce

Divorce is the dissolution of a marriage which has previously been recognised by law. Divorce involves a court process.

2. God's position on divorce;

- (i) The prophet Malachi declared, *"For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel"* (Malachi 2:16).
- (ii) Jesus said, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder"* (Matt. 19:6; see also Mark 10:6-9). Divorce is a departure from the purposes of God.
- (iii) The Bible teaches that even when a Christian is married to an unbeliever, the Christian should continue to live with his or her mate if at all possible (1 Cor. 7:12-13).
- (iv) While in the Old Testament divorce was allowed and apparently easily secured, this, like polygamy, was contrary to God's highest intentions. Jesus explained that provisions for divorce in the Old Testament were an accommodation to "the hardness" of people's hearts. (Matt. 19:8).

K3C, therefore, will seek always to discourage divorce as a solution to marital problems.

3. Grounds for divorce on a biblical perspective;

- (i) While divorce is always contrary to God's intentions, there are certain circumstances when it is permitted. Jesus said in Matthew 5:32 and again in Matthew 19:9 that a person is not to divorce his mate except for the cause of fornication. The Greek word used for "fornication" refers to habitual sexual immorality for which the synonym "whoredom" may be used, implying all kinds of immorality, including adultery which desecrates the marriage relationship - a view generally accepted by Greek scholars.

- (ii) It is incumbent on a believer therefore to entertain divorce only as a last resort and because of violations through fornication - never as a reason to marry someone else (Mark 10:11- 12). When one partner of a divorce has become involved in adultery, the offended mate is permitted, though not required, to get a divorce.
- (iii) If an unsaved husband or wife refuses to continue to live with his or her mate and departs, the believer may agree to this separation: *“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases”* (1 Cor. 7:15). Such separations may result in divorce, and in that event the Christian is free from bondage.
- (iv) If a person is divorced on other than the above scriptural grounds and his or her former partner remarries, that partner by remarrying has, according to scriptural standards (Matt. 5:32 and 19:9), committed adultery and has dissolved the original relationship (1 Corinthians 7:10-11)

4. Remarriage

- (i) The remarriage of persons who have been divorced is permitted by Scripture in the following two (2) circumstances;
 - a. If after being divorced, one of the original marriage partners dies, the remaining partner is free to remarry (Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39)
 - b. When an adulterous relationship has brought about a divorce, the party who is innocent may remarry (this appears to be implied by Matthew 5:32). However even where this license/allowance exists, the offended party may consider the reconciliation with their previous spouse.
- (ii) Remarriage on grounds of a spouse leaving the matrimonial home is not permitted (1 Corinthians 7:11) *“But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.”* In other words, if the unbelieving, deserting party is not deceased and does not remarry, neither should the one who has been deserted remarry.
- (iii) When two unbelievers have been divorced and one is subsequently converted and neither has remarried, the believer should attempt to restore the marriage.
- (iv) Persons who have been divorced on other than scriptural grounds, who subsequently become Christians, are not absolved from the necessity to remain unmarried by having become Christians. While it is true that we are made new creatures in Christ, we continue to bear legal and moral responsibilities that existed before conversion.

5. Church life for those who have divorced

- (i) Persons who are divorced, or divorced and remarried on scriptural grounds, are entitled the full privileges of fellowship and membership in the church.
- (ii) A believer who was divorced when unsaved, or divorced and remarried on other than scriptural grounds while still a non-believer, should likewise be received into full Christian fellowship (1 Corinthians 7:24). The grace of Christ forgives all sin; the person in Christ is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- (iii) Care must be exercised in the choice of divorced and remarried persons for places of leadership in the church. While all believers are equal members of the Body of Christ, not all members are qualified equally for every office in the church. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9 elaborate on the office of elder and deacon. Ministry leaders at K3C are to be filled by those of high moral and spiritual qualifications, whose pattern of exemplary Christian living is so established that it may be followed.
- (iv) A believer who knowingly secures a divorce on other than scriptural grounds, will be granted full privileges of Christian fellowship only after a demonstration of genuine repentance for deliberate departure from scriptural standards.
- (v) A believer who knowingly marries someone who was divorced on other than scriptural grounds will be granted full privileges of Christian fellowship only after a demonstration of genuine repentance for deliberate departure from scriptural standards.
- (vi) A believer whose divorce was granted on other than scriptural grounds and who remarries will be granted full privileges of Christian fellowship only after a demonstration of genuine repentance for deliberate departure from scriptural standards.