

The Restoration of Marriage

in a Fallen Church and Civilization

Nearly four thousand years ago, our Father that we call Lord and God called forth his servant Avraham to go out from his home to a place that he did not know. Our father Avraham obeyed, and went out to the land of promise. From that one man and his faithfulness, God called forth a promised line of children, who formed His chosen nation, which would be a light to the world. Yet that promise of salvation through a nation could not be fulfilled by this mere people group, these physical sons of Avraham; ultimately that promise to our father was the promise of the Savior, so from a chosen nation, came a chosen Son who would make many sons for Him for eternity. This He has done, faithfully, being perfect where Israel has failed. This is the plan of salvation offered to all who call upon the name of YHVH, and among this chosen people, we have been given the power to have faith, the power to seek righteousness, the power to strike down Satan in any attack he might make against the work of the Savior. We want to remind you of this, before we begin, to remember the incredibly faithfulness of God. That through one man, and him as good as dead, came as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. We today may be outnumbered one hundred to one by pagans, and surrounded by darkness, but we know what our Father can do.

We also know in contrast what Elohim does with a faithless people. We know what Adonai did with adulterous Israel, who chased after pagan gods for centuries, who bowed down to idols even sacrificing their children in the fires. Elohim brought terrible judgment on Israel and shattered them violently as a nation, allowing them to return only after many years of captivity. How similar is the modern Church's destruction of marriage to national Israel's adultery; Elohim even calls abandoning a spouse and remarrying another adultery over and over. Furthermore scripture tells us that no adulterer, as no sodomite, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Most chillingly the results of our adultery on our children parallel the horror of child sacrifice. Therefore the Body of Messiah's current state of adultery and destruction of marriage looks very similar to ancient Israel's. We will face judgment just as Israel did; for the sin of adultery is likened to the sin of idolatry; we say through the illustration of our multiple marriages that we deny our Savior as husband, and wish to replace Him with another.

With that meditation on our minds, we want to thank you faithful servants for hearing our proposal. We aim in the face of collapse in the Church to restore marriage to a godly standard, and to teach and practice God's holy Word on marriage. I realize this requires asking many of you to change the way you do things in your congregations. It also requires asking many of you to change your set theologies regarding marriage. That's an immense decision yet that is what we propose; firstly a restoration of Covenant Marriage as taught in scripture, and secondly an establishment of biblical standards of marriage preparation. We earnestly desire for the Body of Messiah to work towards restoration together, as a unity, as one, as Elohim has made us. Please then hear us together, even if you sit alone in your church office, know you are among the spirits of many men and one in the Spirit of God.

1: Covenant Marriage Restoration.

Introduction

Marriage in the New Covenant expresses the ultimate incredible desire Elohim has for His people – the marriage of His eternal Son Yeshua and His holy Bride. It is a sign of the heavenly union of Christ and the Church. Of the Redeemer and the redeemed. Our marriages then are a teaching of salvation to the world. As God made man and woman one flesh, He saves us through a similar union in His Son. Husband and wife also live out these sacred roles by illustration, the husband as Messiah, leads, protects and guides in holiness his wife; the wife, as the Kahol (Church) desires to help his work and do his will and be a pure and holy vessel for him.

Believers throughout the centuries have seen other incredible teachings in New Covenant marriage as well. For example, marriage reflects the very nature of God Himself, as Father, Son and Spirit. As the Ruach (Spirit) springs forth from the Father and the Son as they love one another, so does the child spring forth from the husband and wife. Their love like God's is a life-giving love. What a treasure we as little Messiahs have been given. Not only that, but the union of the woman and the man in marriage reflects the great national unity that the Lord will bring on His earth; that of Israel and the Nations, of Jew and Gentile. For when all Israel wakes up to faith in Yeshua, the Gentiles will be grafted in together with them, and all nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God and the Lamb. As many have pointed out, just as Elohim put Adam to sleep, and used a small piece of his flesh to make his wife, so did Elohim put Israel to sleep, and use a small seed of faithful Jews to make the Bride of the Lamb. And when the time of the Gentiles is finished, Israel like Adam will wake up, and receive its partner in union.

Thus, marriage is an incredible and rich theological teaching, and a sign of the invisible and divine. I hope we are all in awe of that together. Of course marriage is even more than a sign, since Adonai uses it to provide regular physical blessings both immense and very ordinary. Most importantly, marriage brings forth children, which scripture calls many times a blessing, arrows in the hand of a warrior. Furthermore, we are instructed to raise those children up to Adonai. This is a blessing too. Marriage also provides social stability, financial support, moral instruction, discipline, protection and happiness, all through the godly union, the family and the home. The physical blessings accompanying marriage are well established by observable fact, and a number are specifically instructed or described in scripture. The family is a well-spring of life. And how fitting; the spiritual reality it expresses is a wellspring of eternal life; the physical reality creates and nurtures physical life. It is, once again, a picture of salvation.

Our Current Collapse

Yet as we know terribly well, we have reached a point when the Kahol (Church) has greatly damaged marriage as it has been known through history and scripture. This is a fall of truly historical proportions. What happens when we take such a treasure and damage it? When we deny ourselves this divine sign? When we deny that man and woman are one flesh in an inseparable union? When we make practically a mockery of it with half of marriages ending in divorce? [\[1\]](#) When we have children shuttling back and forth between homes? Or living with only one parent? When we adopt a secular mindset of marriage as personal fulfillment? When we have countless believers in adulterous remarriages expecting to be treated as if evil is normal? What happens to our witness to the Savior? What happens to our picture of salvation? What happens to our overflowing physical blessings we've just described above?

At the minimum, as you certainly know, we disobey our God and we rightly come under His judgment. We deny God His authority, just as any sin does. Secondly, we blot out the picture of the Savior that we are to present to the world. We weaken or destroy our witness to who Yeshua is. We tell the world Yeshua is pretty good, but he does NOT make us into new men. We tell the world Christ may have a union with the Church, but NOT one where He actually cares for His Bride or where His Bride actually respects Him enough to keep holy. It is a bankrupt union we show the world. And a failed Savior. It seems our witness, when it comes to marriage, is a lot like the pagan priests who sought to better Elijah in battle. That's right, the pagan priests. They cried out to their god for fire from heaven, but no fire came. They called and called, all the while being mocked by the true prophet of YHVH; they leapt, they cut their flesh as pagans often did, but where was the fire? Where was the light? They had none because their god was

not God. If we continue in marriage as we are now, this is our witness -- an altar with no fire, and a menorah with no light to cast out into the world.

On top of that spiritual blackness and death, there are of course untold physical consequences. We're not going to go into great detail as to what the collapse of Christian marriage has meant to our society. I trust most of you know already. But just to name a few major effects beyond the disobedience to Elohim and the darkened witness, it has meant financial troubles for families, emotional distress, and an insecure, family-less living which results in higher risk of violence, of drug abuse, of criminality, of suicide, of abortion. [\[2\]](#) The effects upon millions of the dissolution of marriage are immense and truly evil. They are from hell.

The situation is so poor for the Kahol, it comes off as truly shocking that it dares to instruct others in righteous behavior. For at this time when so many "conservative" Christians complain about the gender bending or homosexuality in the secular world, at a time when some believers are taking a public stand to fight against it, we look immensely hypocritical when we disrespect marriage ourselves. When we drag through the mud the unity of man and woman. Yet that is what we do. Why should people who ignore God's teachings about marriage be taken seriously when they complain that others ignore them too? Why should people who refuse to obey God's teaching that marriage is a covenant until death, complain when others refuse to obey God's teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman? The Kahol is not standing with traditional marriage itself so it has little moral strength to teach others to do so. The Kahol is not forsaking its own terrible evils, so it has little wisdom in showing others to forsake theirs. As believers we are not in a position to take ANY bold public stand, because our own stand is so weak. We must reform ourselves first.

How many of you do not look around and feel certain in your mind and soul that we are now being judged? How many look at the crime, the abortion, the immorality, much of it deeply entwined with the collapse of Christian marriage, and not sense strongly the scourge of God upon us? Yet if that scourge is what you sense then mustn't we act? If you know as shepherds our need for repentance, then the powerful impetus is on you to act, and act bravely, even though it seems countless souls do not wish to hear. How many have even called out for national repentance? How many have called out for revival? My God, we have heard it so many times ourselves. If believers had a dime for every time we heard the word revival we could

move in to a flat as big as Benny Hinn's. We hear it so many times...So isn't it time then to act upon it, and obey our God and repent? Let us turn then, and repent.

Scriptures

For man and woman becoming one flesh until death is the simple, scriptural truth in the word of the living God. That is New Covenant marriage. That is what our marriages must be. Scripture repeatedly tells us our lives must be an illustration of Messiah's teachings. Our lives must be a witness to His character. Our families must be a witness. They are a well-spring of physical and spiritual life. Therefore, I want to use this following space to show you Covenant Marriage from the Word of Elohim, and I hope that you will listen with an earnest heart. We do not express our mere opinions here.

To begin with brothers, scripture multiple times calls remarriage adultery. Scripture also multiple times calls marriage a covenant until death, even going into the details to explicitly say that when a spouse has died the other is free to remarry. The plain scriptures are powerful on this subject, and we will go into that in a moment. Furthermore, Covenant Marriage was the understanding of the Body of Messiah from the earliest recorded age; the early Christian Fathers broadly accepted that remarriage was adultery for hundreds of years. In fact no major Church body started officially allowing for remarriage until the Eastern Orthodox started making allowances about a thousand years after our Lord's death and resurrection. [3] Hence the plain reading of scripture, alongside its broad early understanding, all stand with a one-flesh-until-death understanding of marriage.

Here are some of the major passages from Yeshua's teaching:

Mark 10:1-11 *

Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.

² The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce *his* wife?" testing Him.

³ And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?”

⁴ They said, “Moses permitted *a man* to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss *her*.”

⁵ And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. ⁶ But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

¹⁰ In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same *matter*. ¹¹ So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Luke 16:18

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from *her* husband commits adultery.

Brothers, here we have several teachings of the Savior that tell us in ordinary language that remarriage is adultery. Adultery is a grave evil. The passage from Mark also explains some of the reasoning behind the teaching, including going back to Genesis, and reminding us that man and wife are “one flesh.” What God has joined together no man shall separate. The passage from Luke comes with no explanation, but is plain in its statement that marrying a divorced spouse is adultery. These are truly powerful teachings. Why are they disregarded?

Matthew 19:1-10

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, *that* He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

³ The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?”

⁴ And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So then,

they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

⁷ They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”

⁸ He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

¹⁰ His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it is better not to marry.”

Matthew 19 also contains very clear statements that marrying one divorced is the sin of adultery. This fact often gets lost in the clamor to use the passage to justify remarriage. Like the scriptures in Mark 10 it also includes the foundation from Genesis along with the teaching that man and wife are made one flesh by Elohim, and man cannot separate them.

The source of much recent division on understanding this passage comes from the phrase “except for sexual immorality.” Proponents of the newer, more liberal understanding of divorce and remarriage take this to mean that one can divorce and remarry if adultery has occurred, or most specifically if one is the innocent part in adultery. However, from the earliest era, this exception clause was commonly taken as an exception for divorce, [\[4\]](#) not an exception for remarriage. That is why the Kahol has had the history it has had with marriage, one very different originally from its pagan neighbors. Abandoning this understanding in contrast has helped the Kahol become much more similar to those pagans, if not identical.

Furthermore, newer interpretations of Matthew 19 read the exception clause as an exception for fornication before the marriage is consummated; [\[5\]](#) this could have been in the nearly year period before the first betrothal ceremony and the second marriage ceremony, a gap which was customary in Jewish tradition. It could also have been hidden fornication before betrothal, which is prohibited by Moses. This interpretation, while it does not have the support of the early fathers, reads more naturally than any, especially since the word for fornication (*porneia*) is used in the passage, and NOT the word for adultery (*moichao*). It also makes good sense that this exception only appears in Matthew’s gospel, as that is the gospel written primarily for Jews. The author then would have been pointing out an exception any Jew would have asked about. It was an exception to be used before consummation. It was never meant to end consummated marriages.

We are asking churches for a return to the historical respect for covenant marriage, and to a standard set apart from the world. It is a very difficult standard to reach, and that is surely why Yeshua's disciples said that perhaps "it is better not to marry." Yet this is the standard of the Savior. If He has instructed us in it, then he has surely given us the capacity to succeed through His grace. Let us trust in Him in marriage as in all things.

Let's look now at the major relevant passages from the Epistles:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband. ¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.

1 Corinthians 7:39

A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

Romans 7:1-3

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? ² For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. ³ So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

These three passages are also very clear on the subject of Christian marriage. The first tells us that a wife who is separated from her husband must either remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. That is only two choices there. Chastity or reconciliation. It does not give the option to remarry. We really don't know how any teaching can be clearer than this. The next passage says that the wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if he dies she is free

to remarry whom she wishes. We can see that the wife is free to remarry after the husband's death, not before. The final passage explicitly compares marriage to a covenant. It goes over the relevant observations that the wife is bound to her husband until death and that after his death she is free to remarry. However, if she remarries while he is still alive, she is called an adulteress. These are powerful teachings. They call common practices in the Church today adultery, and are very clear and blunt in that judgment. Why should we treat marriage any differently?

1 Corinthians 7:12-15

¹² But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.

This is the major scripture from the Epistles which has given rise to the claim that there is an exception for remarrying: the exception of the believing spouse who is forced into a divorce by the unbelieving spouse. Even the Catholic Church, which otherwise has kept very biblical in its approach to marriage, uses this passage as a justification for divorce and remarriage, calling it instead "Pauline Privilege." It is a very old justification, with the earliest cited support of it coming from the late 4th century. With no clear history on its earliest development, we presume it grew gradually in its use until it was accepted into the historical Church's laws.

However, despite the popularity with which ministers use this as justification for what scripture calls adultery, we cannot accept that this passage teaches an exception. Number one, the claim that it teaches an exception is based on the phrase saying the spouse is "not under bondage." However the Greek word for "under bondage" (douloo) is not even the same word used elsewhere for marriage in the same chapter; this is deo, translated as "bound" in 1 Corinthians 7:27, 39 along with Romans 7:2. Douloo (under bondage) is used most of the time to refer to severe servitude. Deo (bind) is used multiple times for marriage, as well as other kinds of binding. If they are not even the same word in Greek, we should not take them to mean the same thing, and consider the believing spouse free to remarry. This makes simple linguistic sense.

Naturally then, this phrase “not under bondage” might also refer to other marriage responsibilities or even the previous instructions to the believing spouse to stay with the unbelieving one for sanctification. It is saying – you are not a slave to these things. Not only that, but if we take “not under bondage” to mean the spouse can divorce or remarry, the instructions are then in conflict with the clear passages we’ve looked at calling remarriage adultery and calling marriage a covenant until death. There are five of these which are unambiguous. We should not take this passage then to be an exception, because scripture cannot contradict scripture.

I realize you brothers have likely heard much of this before, but we feel “bound” to say it again. One thing we hope you can see is that the ordinary and clear rendering of many passages does not allow for divorce and remarriage. It is simply prohibited and called adultery. Those who seek to make exceptions do so based on more ambiguous passages, and force scripture to contradict itself in making their exceptions. If you can see that this is true, then you should be standing with what Christians understood from the earliest of eras was marriage: a covenant until death. Wouldn’t you rather stick with this plain reading of scripture and its earliest understanding, than with the more liberal view, which has brought us to the disaster we have now? We ask all of you to stand with the early Church in restoring Covenant Marriage. We trust that you stand with the Savior in doing so.

Changing with the New Reality

One of the biggest problems most churches will have in even considering what we propose is what to do with all the people in their congregations who are living in sin through remarriage. We realize that is an immediate concern, and that it is a frightening if not painful subject. Yet if we hold a faith which calls us to obedience to Elohim and we hold a faith which calls us to repentance of our sins, we MUST face up to this current situation bravely and obediently. In short that would mean teaching the truth regardless of whom it offends. It would also mean asking couples currently in sin to become celibate or separate. Couples living in sin through remarriage, as couples living in other sins, would naturally be excluded from certain Church functions, if not cut off entirely. That is the truth, though a very sad one. Let us take action and deal with the suffering now, rather than let things continue as they are, which is an abomination and a lie before God and the world.

There are many who would protest, saying that remarriage is only adultery at the time it happens. They might then insert that over time, or with love, it ceases to be adultery. Yet this is not a reasonable way to look at the reality of an adulterous relationship. This is ongoing sin, and what ongoing sin ceases to be sin because there are some good things attached to it also? By

way of comparison, could one also say that a homosexual marriage ceases to be sin if there is love involved? Or what about an incestuous marriage, perhaps between a mother and son? It is true that Elohim is faithful to forgive our sins (Elohim is faithful in all things) but God forgives the repentant sinner, not the sinner who continues shamelessly in their sin refusing to change. Therefore if we want the sinful couple to be made right before Elohim, they must end what they are doing in sincere repentance. Adultery does not cease being adultery until it stops.

It is true that asking adulterers who have already had children to end their adultery seems terrifying, but think of it in light of these three things: Firstly, it is often that an adulterous couple has already left children behind from their true marriages; isn't it right that THOSE children have their mother and father too? It seems where it is possible they should. Therefore, we do ask souls to return to their covenant marriages. Secondly, the great prophet Ezra, who walked with Elohim closer than any man on the planet today, had little problem commanding Israel to give up its many pagan wives, and Israel gave up its many pagan wives despite any pain that might have been involved. This mass separation was for a very similar reason as we bring up here, as the Jewish people had been marrying into tribes that were forbidden to them. Thus those marriages were invalid from the beginning. To obey God, they had to end their invalid marriages, and this they did. Let the children of Yeshua do the same.

Thirdly, and this is really its own subject, we wish to propose a method which in some cases would not demand complete separation when children are involved. We suggest that couples, instead of staying in an adulterous remarriage, can choose to change their relationship to another official, yet not adulterous relationship; that is the relationship of civil partners. As you well know, the secular world has used civil unions to normalize moral evil, specifically homosexuality. However, a partnership is only a partnership, and there is nothing fundamentally immoral about being partners. Therefore, we suggest as an option, that couples end their invalid marriage and form a unique kind of civil partnership for the sake of the children, remaining chaste, and if possible living apart yet nearby. There is nothing adulterous about that, yet it can preserve various good things about what is otherwise sinful, such as the sharing of resources and the raising of children. We strongly believe this is one useful tool to free the Body of Messiah from its current shackles of remarriage. [\[6\]](#)

One more facet in dealing with remarriages is that of annulments. [\[7\]](#) Should we through annulments consider certain marriages void? We believe there needs to be a meeting of minds among pastors to come to a useful agreement as to what churches will accept regarding them. Who among us would think that a 6-year-old married in Pakistan is actually married before God? Yet we also know annulments have been used for some dubious reasons, and the practical applications of the good reasons have often been stretched. [\[8\]](#) So while it may not be an exact

science, we seek unanimity among shepherds in what amounts to a valid marriage to be respected by all. [9](#) A valid marriage is a covenant until death.

A Call to Repentance

You know, there is probably not one preacher today who does not say we are under judgment. And it's been said that the harshest judgment Elohim ever brings on this earth is to harden the hearts of men. The harshest judgment is not a natural disaster. It's not even the horrors of war. It is the hardening of man's heart. When we look at the society we live in, which has turned marriage into a mere mockery of itself, can't we see the hardened heart there? And when we look at a world which is set upon replacing traditional marriage, motherhood, fatherhood, manhood and womanhood, can we not look at ourselves and say we helped make it happen? We played our part. We became hardened too. We bear much responsibility for the tragedy around us, and we are rightly being judged.

Now it is much harder to live one sermon than it is to give a thousand, but that is what we are asking all of you ministers; to live one sermon. We are inviting you to take up your swords and engage in great battle to restore the Kahol, to restore the Lord's holy Bride in marriage. Let us fight for the restoration of the Bride. Let us do it together as one. This time will be marked in history years later as a great restoration, and a turning point, when men of God turned entire communities and literally millions of faithful souls away from the brink. It will be remembered as a time when whole communities actually took heed of the words of the prophets and turned from their evil. From their adultery. From their idolatry. That is how it will be remembered, I am sure. Unless of course we do nothing to repent. Unless we refuse to change. In that case it will be largely forgotten and irrelevant, as is much of the Church today. Please lead our communities in repentance, before it is too late.

2: Marriage Training

While the restoration of Covenant Marriage is the center of what we are calling for, we also propose tools for churches to create flourishing marriages, beyond simply altering doctrine. Therefore, the second part of our proposal is a set standard of pre-marriage training. In a sense our life in Christ itself should be a great marriage seminar, as He is our husband and we His Bride. Yet it is also important for believers to have a good understanding of what marriage in Christ actually is, and to be prepared for it together with their spouse. It seems apparent that many believers go into marriage with a view closer to the worldly view of marriage, or even

sometimes worse. It is a view in which we want to spend time with someone who excites us, or a view in which we want a mere partnership or shared life. Christian marriage is much more, and it lays the way for disaster if our brethren are entering marriage in ignorance and unprepared.

Therefore we ask you shepherds for a coordinated action towards marriage preparation; we ask thousands of churches to join together in setting the same or very similar standards for whom they will marry along with communicating the biblical understanding future spouses ought to have. It is important to point out that when churches have done this in the United States, there is a proven record of success, with churches immediately showing fewer divorces among the couples they marry. Many of these churches have mentor programs as well, for those already married.

Just to cite a few examples of these successes, please consider these observations from recent news articles:

On City Turnarounds:

In over 135 cities around the country where **Community Marriage Covenants** have been signed by clergy, congregations, and civic leaders, divorce rates are falling dramatically. In Modesto, California, for example, the divorce rate has plummeted 47.6 percent since 1986, when 95 pastors signed America's first Community Marriage Policy. [\[10\]](#)

Two cities present especially striking figures. Modesto in California was the first city to sign a CMP in 1986. Since then divorce rates have fallen 56%, marriage rates have risen 12%. These data stand in stark contrast to US national figures. Given these changes in family structure, other social factors associated with family structure should also have improved in Modesto. Sure enough, school truancy rates are down 20% and teenage pregnancies are down 30%. Kansas City comes close to providing a control study. Since the 1995 CMP signing in “Kansas City, Kansas”, divorce rates have now fallen 46%. Across the river in “Kansas City, Missouri”, there is no CMP and no accompanying media publicity. Divorce rates there are just 6% lower. [\[11\]](#)

The numbers really are stunning. While divorce statistics nationwide and even on the Missouri side of the state line have stayed depressingly constant over the last several years, these same numbers have dropped dramatically on the Kansas side.

In Johnson County, though the marriage rate held steady from 1995 to 1998, the number of divorces plunged from 880 in 1995 to 508 in 1998, a 42% decline in just three years. In Wyandotte County, the figure dropped from 650 in 1995 to 340 in 1997, a nearly 50% decrease, before settling back in at 526 in 1998. In Jackson and Clay Counties, however, the number of divorces has continued to rise. [\[12\]](#)

Individual Church Examples:

St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Richmond is a 1,000 member church which has prepared 61 couples for marriage in five years, only one of who has divorced, though several canceled or postponed wedding plans. Another 27 couples attended enrichment events, none of whom divorced.. St. Giles has also worked with eight couples in crisis, none of whom divorced, though two are still separated. To learn more, call Bob Ruthazer at 804 282-9763. [\[13\]](#)

Killearn United Methodist Church is a 3,000 member congregation of - the largest Protestant church in Tallahassee - which has prepared nearly 150 couples for marriage since 1999, **none of whom has divorced**. Its "back-from-the-brink" Mentor Couples have also worked with 30 troubled marriages, none of whom divorced, though two couples who did not seek help did divorce. [\[13\]](#)

The above stories are stunning. While the numbers might vary a bit, and while there may be other factors at work, who would doubt that community commitment to marriage training is making a major difference? Time will tell us more about the success of these agreements, but for now they are a positive sign and one that ought to spur more churches to action. We're looking at city-wide drops in divorce between 40-something and 50-something percent. We're looking at individual churches that have a divorce rate of zero to several percent. These successes have been measured over decades.

While we don't desire to propose a detailed plan for marriage preparation or for mentorship (various such plans are out there) we propose that churches agree to certain principles and standards in preparation, with some leeway for fine-tuning at the local level. These are standards for educating spouses in preparation for biblical Covenant Marriage, not for other kinds of unions:

Churches agree to:

Marry only couples which have known one another for at least a year

...Have been through at least 6 months of biblical marriage preparation

...Know that marriage is a Covenant broken only by death

...understand that remarriage while their spouse is still living is adultery in God's eyes

...Are prepared to be married publically for life

...Know what scripture teaches on marriage, husbands, wives, raising children

...Recognize that marriage is a witness to Yeshua and in a sense a ministry

...Know the marriage is an expression of the union of Messiah and the Kahol

...Understand that having children is a central part of every marriage

...Know that they are to raise their children up in the Lord in a faithful and obedient household

...Know the many earthly blessings that commonly come with marriage and the family, such as greater happiness, emotional stability, financial stability, better education, lower rates of violence, criminality, abortion etc....that it is a force for the good

...Know they are to go to the Kahol for any needed counseling and troubles, preferably their own local one

Churches are advised to:

Ask couples to make their commitment pledge public in their church building

...Let couples know that having Christ first in other areas of their lives is a big part of their union being a godly one

...Have marriage counseling available by church leaders

...have help available from mentor couples

...be prepared to provide some practical lessons on how to be a leader and to be submissive, especially since we live in a culture which dampens or attacks the roles of men and women

...be prepared to help households in other ways, such as possible housing or financial needs

...have help for children available, including biblical education and child care

Couples Should Pledge:

That their marriage is a Covenant Union for life

...they will love and care for the other's entire being, especially in spiritual wellness

...love is complete giving of their being and is sacrifice, even for a sinner, as is the love of Christ

...as husband and wife they represent Christ and His Church, that the husband is to love his wife as His own flesh, and the wife submit to him in all things

...they will have children and raise them up in Messiah

...they will respect their marriage as an illustration of their faith as well as a ministry

...the grace of Messiah upholds all things in their marriage, and empowers them to fulfill their roles

The above pledges present the basic foundation of marriage preparation in churches, but other details would be left up to the local congregation. We wish that these pledges cover the biblical instructions, principles and some practical advice so that we will not have couples married in haste or with little biblical and practical preparation. Most importantly, we want faithful couples married knowing that their marriage is about glorifying the Savior in every way. I hope all of you can see the benefit in them. Let us transform our communities through these godly commitments. They will go hand in hand with a restoration and unity on the doctrine of Covenant Marriage.

We realize there are many other areas of our lives and ministries of the Kahol which need reform. However marriage is so central to our lives and the current situation so urgent we encourage you to restore marriage as our first great battle. We ask you to dedicate yourselves to it. To consecrate yourselves to it. Marriage is the picture of what we all believe in. Truly if

this restoration does not happen now, if you do not hear this call, we see nothing more than a cliff ahead of us. The Lord will never allow the Kahol to die, but he certainly will allow us to fall away in large numbers. He will allow us to be mostly destroyed. We do not want that. We do not want more judgment. We know the hour is very late for the Kahol and for the nation, but we still pray for Adonai's mercy and still preach repentance. It may be too late already, but we are calling you to act now. Please do not walk away from our plea. There may not be any more chances left.

End Notes

[1] <http://www.christianpost.com/news/study-christian-divorce-rate-identical-to-national-average-31815/>
http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_US_divorce_rate_for_Christians_versus_non_Christians

[2] <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2004/03/marriage-still-the-safest-place-for-women-and-children>
http://www.breakingthespiralofsilence.com/downloads/why_marriage_matters.pdf
<http://storage.cloversites.com/restorationresourcesministryinc/documents/marriageanddivorce.pdf>

[3] <http://www.danielrjennings.org/ThisHistoryOfChristianThoughtOnMarriageDivorceAndRemarriage.pdf>

pg1-2, pg16 (remarriage in East)

<http://whatismarriagetonywpiano.weebly.com/1/post/2010/08/post-2-what-was-the-understanding-and-teaching-of-the-church-for-1500-years.html>

<http://www.ephraministries.org/remnant-2008-3Q-divorce-remarriage-early-church.a5w>

[4] Augustine "A woman begins to be the wife of no later husband unless she has ceased to be the wife of a former one. She will cease to be the wife of a former one, however, if that husband should die, not if he commit fornication. A spouse, therefore, is lawfully dismissed for cause of fornication; but the bond of chastity remains. That is why a man is guilty of adultery if he marries a woman who has been dismissed even for this very reason of fornication" (ibid., 2:4:4).

[5] http://www.danielrjennings.org/except_for_fornication_version_1.pdf

[6] See [End Page 1](#)

[7] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annulment_\(Catholic_Church\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annulment_(Catholic_Church))

[8] <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/deaconsbench/2012/05/loose-canon-vatican-may-tighten-rules-on-annulments/>

[9] See **End Page 2**

[10] <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2001/03/encouraging-marriage-and-discouraging-divorce>

[11] <http://www.2-in-2-1.co.uk/articles/maredn/index6.html>

[12] http://www.ingramsonline.com/Dec2000/Phenom%20in%20Kansas/phenomenon_inkc.htm

[13] <http://www.marriagesavers.org/sitems/Resources/Articles/Art004ChurchesEliminateDivorce.htm>

Here is a system of actions we recommend in dealing with adulterous remarriages in your church:

- 1) Couple, non-members, already divorced and remarried into adultery

Can sit in the pews, but not become members or participate in certain church functions unless they end their adultery, including possible return to their covenant spouse or possible civil partnership

- 2) Couple, already members, already divorced and remarried into adultery

Must cease membership and certain church activities unless they end their adultery, including possible return to their covenant spouse or possible civil partnership

- 3) Two people, already members, engage in a divorce and adulterous remarriage against already established church rules

Must be excommunicated, since they are both sinning wilfully and defying church authority

End Page 2: Sub-proposal on defining a valid marriage

We propose a preliminary definition of a valid marriage as:

The public profession of a lifelong, monogamous union between a man and a woman open to procreation

We propose possible reasons to declare a professed marriage invalid (annulments):

- Certain common law marriages which occurred legally simply because a couple was living together, but never involved the intent or profession of a valid marriage
- A marriage of a small child
- A marriage made to happen by force
- A marriage in which anyone was insane at the time the decision was being made, such as a psychotic who cannot tell between fantasy and reality
- A marriage in which one partner intentionally deceived the other about being a Christian
- A marriage in which one partner intentionally deceived the other about willingness or ability to have children
- A marriage not between a man and a woman
- A marriage specified to be only for a limited time period

The above represent a selection of probable reasons for annulments churches could use. We would however like to hammer them out more clearly and get them agreed upon broadly. We would also like to specifically shore up against potential misuses of all of the above and any other possible changes. That would mean brainstorming possible misuses and specifically prohibiting them as reasons for annulments. It would also mean prohibiting annulments from anyone a pastor believes is trying to trick the system. Considering that there have been many years of questionable annulments to look at, we believe we can do a good job of preventing the large majority of misuses.