

Steadfast Bible Fellowship

Policy Statement on Marriage

October 2013

1. **The Institution of Marriage**

Steadfast Bible Fellowship (SBF) believes that God's ideal for marriage is the life-long covenant union between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:39). The institution of marriage is part of God's Creation Ordinance and is the foundation of civilization. Together with the church and the state, marriage and the family constitute the fundamental institutions through which God does His work in this age. SBF affirms its deep-seated commitment to marriage and the family and to the ideal of a life-long covenant union between one man and one woman.

2. **The Issue of Leadership**

SBF believes that leaders in all institutions of culture are always called to a higher standard. It is difficult to read the sixty-six books of Scripture and not conclude that God holds leaders in government, in the broader society, in the family and in the church to a rigorous standard of accountability. Those who lead must accept that higher level of accountability and that higher standard set by God. SBF willingly embraces this high standard of leadership for its pastoral staff and Board.

3. **The Issue of Divorce and Remarriage**

SBF understands the complexity of this most difficult question. This complexity is compounded by the lack of consensus within conservative evangelical scholarship on (1) whether Jesus is allowing an exception to the marriage ideal ("the exception clause" in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9) for unrepentant sexual immorality; (2) whether Paul is allowing an exception to the marriage ideal for desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15); and (3) the exact meaning of "the husband of one wife" in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 and whether this applies to leadership outside of the local church. Because there is no consensus within the conservative evangelical church on these difficult passages, the SBF Board recognizes this significant disagreement over the interpretation of Scripture and affirms that its role in formulating policy is one of application, not interpretation.

4. **The Policy Statement**

For service on the Board and on the pastoral staff, SBF will only consider candidates who, if married, are committed to the biblical ideal for marriage as defined in Article I of this statement and who are not divorced. Any exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the pastoral staff of SBF is not authorized to officiate at marriage ceremonies for couples who are not willing to commit to the biblical ideal for marriage as articulated in Article I of this statement.