

Confession of Faith
Article 19
Family, Singleness, and Marriage

Note: Numbers within the text below refer to the scripture texts listed below.

We believe that God intends human life to begin in families and to be blessed through families. Even more, God desires all people to become part of the church, God's family. As single and married members of the church family give and receive nurture and healing, Christian family relationships can grow toward the wholeness that God intends.

We recognize that God has created human beings for relationship. God intends human life to be blessed through families, especially through the family of faith. All Christians are to take their place within the household of God, where members treat each other as brothers and sisters.¹ We hold that within the church family, the goodness of being either single or married is honored.² We honor the single state and encourage the church to respect and to include single persons in the life and activities of the church family. Families of faith are called to be a blessing to all families of the earth.³

We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life.⁴ Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ,⁵ a covenant made in the context of the church. According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship.⁶ Marriage is meant for sexual intimacy, companionship, and the birth and nurture of children.

Children are of great importance. Jesus saw them as examples of how to receive the reign of God.⁷ Children are to be loved, disciplined, taught, and respected in the home and in the church. Children are also to honor their parents, obeying them in the Lord.⁸ Younger people are to respect their elders in the home and the church.⁹

The church is called to help couples strengthen their marriage relationship and to encourage reconciliation in times of conflict. The church is also to minister with truth and compassion to persons in difficult family relationships. As the family of God, the church is called to be a sanctuary offering hope and healing for families.

- (1) Ps. 27:10; Luke 8:19-21; Eph. 2:19.
- (2) 1 Cor. 7:38.
- (3) Gen. 12:1-3; Acts 3:25.
- (4) Mark 10:9; 1 Cor. 7:10-11.
- (5) Eph. 5:21.
- (6) Exod. 20:14; 1 Cor. 6:12-20.
- (7) Mark 10:13-16.
- (8) Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4.
- (9) 1 Tim. 5:1-2.

Commentary

1. Although family generally refers to relationships of blood, marriage, or adoption, the Scripture also describes the church as a family. Especially common in the New Testament are the references to Christians as brothers and sisters and as children of God (see Rom. 8:12-17; Gal. 4:5-7; James 2:15).
2. Many in the church remain single or become single. Jesus encouraged some to choose a life of singleness for the sake of the reign of God (Matt. 19:12; Luke 14:20). While Paul regarded marriage as a positive choice, he preferred voluntary singleness for the sake of unconditional commitment to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:25-35).
3. Scripture places sexual intimacy within God's good created order (Gen. 2:23-25). Sexual union is reserved for the marriage bond (Exod. 20:14; Mark 10:11; Rom. 7:1-3). Sexual union is for pleasure and closeness and for procreation. Through procreation, the human family continues from generation to generation. The oneness between husband and wife is a mystery which reflects the oneness of the Godhead and the oneness between Christ and his church. We affirm that Christians who marry should marry in the Lord, to a Christian spouse.
4. Some in the church experience divorce, abuse, sexual misconduct, and other problems that make marriage and family life burdensome or even impossible. Jesus affirmed the sanctity of marriage (Matt. 5:32) and pointed to hardness of the heart as the ultimate cause of divorce (Mark 10:4-9). Today's church needs to uphold the permanency of marriage and help couples in conflict move toward reconciliation. At the same time, the church, as a reconciling and forgiving community, offers healing and new beginnings. The church is to bring strength and healing to individuals and families.