

**God's Institution of Marriage
Fidelity, Fornication, and the Role of the State**
October 1, 2025

INTRODUCTION: Questions are raised among Christians concerning the gifts of marriage and physical intimacy, and whether Christians are required to submit to the laws of the state that govern marriage. Is marriage a public or private matter? Do individual Christians have the right to "marry" without a marriage license, or the public attestation that a marriage has taken place according to God's Word and institution? Is it permissible for a Christian man and woman to enter into a relationship of physical intimacy with each other simply by mutual private promises of love and faithfulness, apart from the public solemnization of marriage by the state? Is one-flesh physical intimacy the sin of fornication when it is practiced outside of marriage? The following theses are based upon God's Word, under the biblical understanding that God is at work through both the civil realm (the state) by the force of law, and the spiritual realm (the church) by the call to repentance and faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Since the presence of sin and/or unbelief exists in both the government and the church, the presence or absence of sin cannot be the basis of obedience to the state or acceptance of the teachings of God's Word from the church. Obedience to the civil authority and adherence to church teaching must be based upon God's Word alone. The answers to the questions raised above rest upon the theology of man's creation in the image of the Holy Trinity, the institution of marriage, and God's gift of life and family as taught in the Holy Scriptures and affirmed by the Lutheran Confessions. The list of passages under each thesis is not exhaustive but is intended to support the thesis and open the door for discussion and further study. Christian theology is a comprehensive whole that is centered in Christ and the redemption from sin that we have through the shedding of His blood. Unless otherwise indicated, the biblical citations are from the New King James Version (NKJV). Underlining is added to underscore the basis for each thesis.

THESES:

1. The Holy Trinity created man in His image, male and female, for procreation and to exercise dominion over the creation.

Genesis 1:26-28: God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 2:7, 15-25: The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being... ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." ¹⁸ And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." ¹⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

²³ And Adam said:

"This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

2. Marriage is instituted by God as the one-flesh lifelong union of one man and one woman.

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:7, 15-25 (See above)

3. Jesus affirmed marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

Matthew 19:3-6: 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."

Mark 10:2-9: 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."

4. It is God who joins a man and woman together in marriage when they enter into marriage willingly and without coercion according to the vows of marriage that reflect God's teaching on marriage (i.e., that it is between one man and one woman, that it is public, that it is not a secret, that it is entered into with the promise of mutual lifelong fidelity).

Matthew 19:6: So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Mark 10:6-9: 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."

5. One-flesh, physical intimacy, is intended only for a man and a woman who are united by God in marriage, because it calls for and expresses the fidelity promised in marriage and explicitly intended by the one-flesh union.

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:7-15 Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:6-9 (See above)

1 Corinthians 7:1-16: Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality [fornication], each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive one another, except

perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

⁶Now as a concession, not a command, I say this, ⁷I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. ⁸To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. ⁹But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. ¹⁰To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord*): the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹(but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. ¹²To the rest I say (I, not the Lord*) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. ¹⁶For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? (ESV)

*“I, not the Lord” does not imply that Paul’s word on marriage is not God’s Word, but rather that at this point he is addressing a topic that was not recorded in the Gospels as something the Lord Jesus directly addressed.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20: Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! ¹⁶Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” ¹⁷But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. ¹⁸Flee sexual immorality [fornication]. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

1 Corinthians 7:25-40: Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. ²⁹This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. ³²I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. ³⁵I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. ³⁶If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. ³⁷But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. ³⁸So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. ³⁹A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God. (ESV)

6. God's call for fidelity in the one-flesh union of marriage reflects the image and faithfulness of the persons of the Holy Trinity.

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:7, 15-25; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 (See above)

1 Corinthians 11:1-3: Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. ² Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. ³ But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

1 Corinthians 11:7-11: [Man] is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹² for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

1 Corinthians 10:1-22: Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality [fornication], as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. ¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. ¹⁸ Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ¹⁹ What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰ Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. ²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

Ephesians 5:1-5, 21-33: Be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. ³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ... submitting to one another in the fear of God. ²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his

own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

7. Fornication is any physical intimacy that is outside of God's institution of marriage.
(e.g., pre-marital sexual relations, living together prior to marriage, homosexual relations, same-sex unions, pornography, masturbation, surrogate parenting, sperm banks, etc.)
(See above)

8. The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Commandments form an interrelated and dependent description of a constellation of gifts from God that reflects His image and which He desires to protect for all mankind.

The Fourth Commandment: "Honor your father and your mother" implies children and establishes God's authority in parents and God's gift of family. Parental authority is the basis of all civil authority in society.

The Fifth Commandment: "You shall not murder" establishes the gift and sanctity of human life which is brought into the world by the one-flesh union of a father and mother.

The Sixth Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery" establishes the sanctity of the one-flesh union of marriage through which God's gift of human life and family is created and nurtured.

9. Family, under the Fourth Commandment, is described as comprised of a husband and wife who have become a father and a mother through the one-flesh union that has produced God's gift of human life in their children.

The Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them. (Small Catechism)

10. Children, under the Fifth Commandment, are to be brought into this world only through the one-flesh union of husband and wife in marriage for the children's protection, care, and nurture.

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need. (Small Catechism)

The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other. (Small Catechism)

11. It "hurts and harms" the sacred life of children to be brought into the world outside of God's institution of marriage and family.

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:7, 15-25 (See above)

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Commandments (See above)

Mark 10:1-16: *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.” ¹³ Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.” ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” ¹⁶ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

Exodus 20:5-6: I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

12. The one-flesh union of marriage, under the Sixth Commandment, is to be protected publicly for the welfare of God’s gift of family (Fourth Commandment) and children (Fifth Commandment), and for the greater good of society.

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Commandments (See above)

Mark 10:1-16 (See above)

Ephesians 5:1-5, 21-33 (See above)

Ephesians 6:1-4: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: ³ “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” ⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

13. The natural law of God is written in the hearts of all human beings, including such things as the sanctity of human life, marriage, and family as God created them.

Romans 1:18-32: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (ESV)

14. After the fall into sin, God instituted civil government to maintain order in society and to protect God's gifts under natural Law and the Ten Commandments.

Matthew 22:15-21: Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Romans 13:1-14: Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. ⁴ For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. ⁶ This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. ⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. ¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. (NIV)

1 Timothy 2:1-4: I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV/Table of Duties)

Titus 3:1: Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. (NIV/Table of Duties)

1 Peter 2:11-25; 3:1-7: Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. ¹³ Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— ¹⁶ as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷ Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. ¹⁸ Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. ³ Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— ⁴ rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. ⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. ⁷ Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

15. God's creation and institution of marriage and family is for the benefit of all humanity and is the basis for all civil authority in the world under the Fourth Commandment.

(See above)

16. Jesus' and the apostolic witness of the New Testament affirm God's institution of civil authority to protect God's Law and the institutions of marriage and family as God ordained them.

(See above)

17. Civil law is to be honored and obeyed as God's law whenever it agrees with and/or protects God's gifts, order, and design for marriage and family in sacred Scripture.

Matthew 22:15-21 and Romans 13:1-14 (See above)

Acts 5:28-32: Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" ²⁹ But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹ Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

18. In the United States, each state establishes the civil laws that define and govern marriage.

See the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and the laws each state has established under them.

19. The church recognizes all civil unions comprised of one man and one woman.

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:7-15 Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:6-9 (See above)

Romans 13:1-14 (See above)

20. The church may bless any civil union which comports with God's institution of marriage.

1 Timothy 4:4-5: For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy [sanctified] by the word of God and prayer. (ESV)

21. Common-law marriage is a disordered exception to the ordinary state laws governing marriage and never applies to casual short-term relationships, but only to those of lengthy and longstanding duration.

See state and case law.

22. Christians are not to practice “common-law marriage,” but are to submit to the state laws governing marriage, in so far as they do not violate God’s Word, because marriage is a public institution that is governed by God’s Word and the laws of the state.

Matthew 22:15-21 and Romans 13:1-14 (See above)

23. “Secret/Private Marriages” do not serve the welfare of society, nor do they confess the public character of God’s institution and thus promote lifestyles of promiscuity, fornication, and infidelity which are destructive to society and God’s gift of marriage, life, and family.

1 Corinthians 7:1-16; 1 Timothy 4:4-5 (See above)

Ephesians 5:3-7: But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them.

Matthew 5:37: Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

1 Peter 2:13-17: Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— ¹⁶ as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷ Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

24. When individuals define marriage on their own terms or enter into so-called “marital relationships” without submitting to state law or the blessing of God’s Word upon their relationship, they can just as easily end that relationship on their own terms and contrary to God’s Word.

1 Corinthians 7:1-16; 1 Peter 1:13-17 (See above)

25. If the state were to abdicate its God-given responsibility to govern marriage or inaugurate laws that infringe upon the right of Christians to enter into marriage as God ordained it, then the church must assume the responsibility of publicly solemnizing marriages so that men and women may continue to enter into the institution of marriage according to the Word of God.

Acts 5:28-32 (See above)

26. In the Scriptures, divorce is provided for only because of hardness of heart (unbelief) of those who refuse to live according to God’s design for marriage.

Mark 10:2-12: 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.”

27. In the pastoral practice of the Church, divorce is allowed for in cases of adultery, physical and emotional abuse, abandonment, or the refusal of an unbelieving spouse to allow the believing spouse to live as a Christian and to rear the children in the Christian faith.

Mark 10:2-12 (See above)

Matthew 19:1-12: 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.” ¹¹ But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”

1 Corinthians 7:10-16: 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. 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. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

28. The Gospel redeems and sanctifies God’s gift of family, life, and marriage as He ordained them.

2 Corinthians 5:9-21: Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. ¹² For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. ¹³ For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves.

but for Him who died for them and rose again. ¹⁶ Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Titus 2:11-14: For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

29. Among Christians, marriage is to reflect the mystery, fidelity, and sacrificial love of Christ's union with His bride, the Church.

Ephesians 5:22-33 (See above)

30. The sinful nature tempts the Christian to yield to the self-centered appetites and covetous desires of the flesh which are contrary to God's will and design for marriage and physical intimacy.

Galatians 5:16-23: I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Romans 7:18: I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

31. Faithful Christians desire to live repentant lives under God's institution and design for marriage and family.

Ephesians 4:17-24: This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 6:1-23: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we

were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

32. The repentant life is characterized by contrition and the renunciation of sin, confession and absolution, and regular prayer which seeks strength from Christ to live a chaste and decent life in word and deed, and to be faithful to God's gift of marriage.

Luke 9:23-26: Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

Luke 11:9-13: "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

1 John 1:5-10: This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 2:1-6: My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the

propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. ³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

James 5:13-16: *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.* ¹⁴ *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.* ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.
¹⁶ Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

33. The incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ saves us from all sin and redeems mankind and the gift of the one-flesh union of marriage as God ordained it at creation.

(See above)

The entire witness of the New Testament Scriptures.

John 1:1-3, 10-14: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
⁵ *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it....* ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.* ¹¹ *He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.* ¹² *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:* ¹³ *who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 3:16-17: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* ¹⁷ *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

Hebrews 1:1-3: *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,* ² *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;* ³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21: *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;* ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. ¹⁶ *Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.* ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* ¹⁸ *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,* ¹⁹ *that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.* ²⁰ *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.* ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

