

Cohabitation (Living Together)



Chapelwood Baptist Church
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Chapelwood Baptist Church

God's View on Cohabitation (Living Together)

Not long ago it was called "living in sin" and was illegal in every state in the union. However today, living together is assumed by many, a good decision. The Bible's answer is simple: living together outside of marriage is morally wrong. In God's view, sexual relations outside of marriage are sinful.

Flee from sexual immorality. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

But why does the Bible say that living together is so wrong? Why are so many couples bypassing marriage and choosing to live together? Can living together before marriage or cohabitation serve as a successful test-drive for a relationship, helping couples avoid years of heartache and pain? There is actually clear proof that it destroys the foundation for a healthy marriage.

1. Living together leads to a significantly greater chance of instability and divorce.

Contrary to the belief that living together before marriage will improve future marital stability, those who live together before marriage have higher separation and divorce rates. Marriages that are preceded by living together have 50 percent higher disruption rates than marriages without premarital cohabitation. (Journal of Marriage and the Family 54)

*"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel.
Malachi 2:16*



Getting married doesn't automatically fix it either. If a cohabiting couple ultimately marries, they tend to report lower levels of marital satisfaction. This is because the relationship was built on a foundation without commitment.

Those who live together do not experience the best sex. Couples not involved before marriage and who are faithful during marriage are more satisfied with their current sex life than those who were involved sexually before marriage. (National Institute for Healthcare Research)

Those who live together before marriage experience more behavioral problems compared with married couples. Couples living together report higher levels of: alcohol problems, aggression, marital instability and depression. Women are assaulted 56 times more than those in couples who do not live together before marriage.

Children living with cohabiting biological parents who are unmarried are 20 times more likely to be abused. Children whose mother lives with a boyfriend who is not the biological father are 33 times more likely to be abused than children with married biological parents. (National Marriage Project, Rutgers)

Living together does not help assure a good match and thus a stronger marriage. It actually causes greater heartache and a higher chance of divorce.

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2. Living together inhibits commitment and the ability to trust.

Sexual abstinence builds trust in the relationship. "If you can be trusted to control yourself around me, then you can be trusted elsewhere and in the future." "If you cross the line with me before marriage, how do I know you won't cross the same line with someone else after we're married?"

It's a demonstration to the other person that you are committed to who they are and not just to what they are physically. Living together and premarital sex creates much distrust in the relationship and therefore greater insecurity in the marriage.

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.
1 Corinthians 4:2

Our society avoids commitment as an act of self-centeredness. Living together encourages a self-centered lack of commitment, which destroys the very nature of what constitutes a healthy marriage.

3. Living together creates is a false love.

Most people think that love is just a strong feeling one has toward another person. However, the elated, "high" feeling we get when we "fall in love" is really infatuation. This kind of "love" is short-lived, and unless replaced by true love, results in broken relationships.

Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?
Proverbs 20:6

Christians are giving in to the erroneous argument that "love makes it ok." It's easier to see each other if we live together or if one spends the night. Where's the love in that attitude? Living together and staying the night is of convenience, not love. Love is built on sacrifice for one another.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 tells us that "love is patient and not self-seeking. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Paul further speaks of the ideal marriage as one in which the husband loves his wife sacrificially (Ephesians 5:21-32). Living together is a foundation of convenience, not love. Love is commitment, putting someone else's needs above your own.

4. Living together erodes the ability to build communication and decision making skills.

Those living together before marriage have more frequent disagreements, more fights, and poorer communication than married couples who had never cohabited.

"Spouses who cohabited before marriage demonstrated more negative and less positive problem solving and support behaviors compared to spouses who did not cohabit." (Journal of Marriage and Family 64)

Sex before marriage prevents communication skills from developing. Instead of working through a disagreement and learning communication skills and more about the other person, sex is an easy way to ignore the disagreement. "Make-up sex" prevents communication skills from developing.

Creating boundaries and sticking to them by not living together, nor having sex, teaches skills necessary for a successful marriage. It teaches how to come to an



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agreement and work together on issues like finances, children, etc. Otherwise, you never learn how to discipline yourself and say no. It often causes one of the spouses to have to "police" the other in certain areas.

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;"

1 Thessalonians 4:2-5

5. Living together destroys God's original plan of marriage.

Cohabitation is wrong, because marriage is God's plan, not human invention. Marriage is not just a good idea or practical necessity; it is a solemn covenant created by God.

Jesus reminds us:

But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.

Mark 10:6-9

Sexual relations outside of marriage violate God's Old Testament law (Deuteronomy 22:22-24; Leviticus 20:10) The New Testament declares all sexual relationships outside of marriage as evil and denounces it for believers (Mark 7:21-23; 1 Corinthians. 6:13, 18; Ephesians 5:3).

Paul encourages husbands and wives to behave properly toward each other because marriage pictures Christ's relationship with His church (John 3:29; Ephesians 5:22-33). In fact, marriage points forward to the fellowship we will one day share with God in eternity (Revelation 19:7; 21:9-10).

Marriage involves three elements: the commitment of the man and the woman to be a spouse to the other, the public expression of that commitment through the wedding ceremony and the consummation of that commitment in the sex act.

When difficult times arise and the temptation to bail out overwhelms them, marriage partners can mentally return to their wedding day and remind themselves of the vows they spoke to God in the presence of witnesses. Such a bold reminder can provide a source of renewed strength to continue to be faithful to the covenant they share.

Marriage is God's proven remedy for immorality and His recipe for a fulfilling relationship.

But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. 1 Corinthians 7:2

The Bible tells us, and every scientific study indicates, that living together does not produce healthier, happier marriages, but the contrary. Mature love is built on the security of knowing that your love is exclusive and permanent.

Therefore, we choose to oppose living together before marriage and encourage other believers to do the same.

Faith2Live Actions

- Admit that cohabitation is not honoring to God and that it is interfering in your relationship with Him and your future spouse.
- Believe that God can and will, through the power of Jesus Christ, enable you to make changes in your life to restore a right relationship with Him and your future spouse.
- Make a decision to allow God to work in your life to change you, realizing it will be difficult.
- Admit to God and another believer the nature of your problem and your desire to overcome it.
- Humbly ask God for His forgiveness.
- Immediately move out, restrain from spending the night with the other person again.
- Draw physical and emotional lines and be committed to maintaining them.
- Trust God and make your future marriage a priority.

Celebrate Recovery is Chapelwood's Christ-centered approach to breaking the power of hurts, habits and hang-ups. Celebrate Recovery meets at 7pm every Monday at Chapelwood.

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