

Why is living together before Marriage considered living in sin?

This¹ question could be much more easily answered if the Bible made a clear proclamation such as “living together before marriage or outside of marriage is ***living in sin***.” Since the Bible makes no such definitive statement, many (including some who profess to be Christians) claim that living together outside of marriage is not living in sin. Perhaps the reason the Bible does not make a clear statement is that, in Bible times, the arrangement of unmarried people living as husband and wife was relatively rare, especially among the Jews and Christians. For the purposes of this article, when we refer to living together, we are referring to living together in the sense of living as husband and wife, including sexual relations, without being married. We are not referring to a man and woman living in the same house without sexual relations.

While the Bible does not make an explicit statement about living in sin, that is not to say the Bible is completely silent on this issue. Rather, we have to put several Scriptures together and glean from them the principle that any sexuality outside of the marriage of one man and one woman is definitely sin. There are numerous Scriptures that declare God’s prohibition of sexual immorality (Acts 15:20; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:13, 18; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Jude 7). The Greek word translated “sexual immorality” or “fornication” in these verses is *porneia* (from which we get the English word *pornography*), and it means literally “unlawful lust.” Since the only form of lawful sexuality is the marriage of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5), then anything outside of marriage, whether it is adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, or anything else, is unlawful, in other words, sin. Living together before marriage definitely falls into the category of fornication—sexual sin.

Hebrews 13:4 describes the honorable state of marriage: “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.” This verse draws a clear distinction between that which is pure and honorable—marriage—and that which is sexually immoral—anything outside of marriage. As living together outside of marriage falls into this category, it is definitely sin. Anyone living together outside of lawful marriage invites the displeasure and judgment of God.

Question: “Is it wrong for a couple to live together before marriage?”²

Answer: The answer to this question depends somewhat on what is meant by “living together.” If it means having sexual relations, it is definitely wrong. Premarital sex is repeatedly condemned in Scripture, along with all other forms of sexual immorality (Acts 15:20; Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Jude 7). The Bible promotes complete abstinence outside of (and before) marriage. Sex before marriage is just as wrong as adultery and other forms of sexual immorality, because they all involve having sex with someone you are not married to.

If “living together” means living in the same house, that is perhaps a different issue. Ultimately, there is nothing wrong with a man and a woman living in the same house—if there is nothing immoral taking place. However, the problem arises in that there is still the appearance of immorality (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Ephesians 5:3), and it could be a tremendous temptation for immorality. The Bible tells us to flee immorality, not expose ourselves to constant temptations to immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18). Then there is the problem of appearances. A couple who is living

¹ <http://www.gotquestions.org/living-in-sin.html>

² <http://ggib.me/2010/07/29/we%E2%80%99re-moving-in-together-a-christian-response-to-unmarried-cohabitation/>

together is assumed to be sleeping together—that is just the nature of things. Even though living in the same house is not sinful in and of itself, the appearance of sin is there. The Bible tells us to avoid the appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Ephesians 5:3), to flee from immorality, and not to cause anyone to stumble or be offended. As a result, it is not honoring to God for a man and a woman to live together outside of marriage.

Cohabitation Confusion: What does the Bible say?³

The fact that many couples live together without the legal commitment of marriage surprises few in our morally dysfunctional society. What is surprising is the number of professing Christians who choose to live together without the benefit of marriage.

Churches and families are increasingly faced with the question of how to respond to these individuals who believe their personal commitments to one another are morally equivalent to legal marriage.

Every moral issue is fundamentally a biblical issue. Genesis 2:18-25 describes marriage as a divine institution. God presented Adam with Eve and established the first marriage.

Genesis 2:24 is the basis for all future marriages: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.” When Jesus was asked about grounds for divorce, He quoted this verse with regard to a legal, binding marriage relationship (Matt. 19:5). When God revealed the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, there were many regulations regarding marriage. A man who seduced a virgin and had sexual relations with her before marriage was required to pay the father of the girl and was required to marry her if the father permitted (Ex. 22:16). Sexual relations with a virgin betrothed to another resulted in death by stoning of both parties (Deut. 22:23-24). These laws revealed the importance of marriage and the sin of premarital sex.

Malachi 2:13-16 speaks against the abandonment of wives by husbands. They are accused of breaking faith and abandoning their marriage covenants (v. 14). **God’s intention was that sexual relationships between a man and a woman should occur only after a legal covenant was established.** The covenant was to provide security and a formal obligation that could not be easily abandoned. Governmental regulation of marriage recognizes the importance of protecting the rights of marriage partners and children.

The New Testament also forbids sexual relations outside marriage. Hebrews 13:4 commands everyone to honor the institution of marriage. In 1 Timothy 4:3, Paul warned that a sign of the end times would be an abandonment of the divine institution of marriage.

Despite the arguments of some, the odds of a successful marriage do not increase because a couple lives together before marriage. In fact, studies reveal the opposite is true.

Where do professing Christian couples find justification for living together without marriage? Their own desires and an immoral culture provide support, but God’s Word is neither vague nor confusing on this point: **A personal commitment between a man and woman is not the moral equivalent of a biblical marriage.**

³ <http://erlc.com/article/cohabitation-confusion-what-does-the-bible-say>

What's Wrong With Living Together Before Marriage?⁴

This is a pretty popular question that comes up with believers and non-believers. Sometimes it's difficult to answer something like this and I think it takes a little more discussion than just answering this one question. In my experience, it typically involves a similar question that goes something like "How far is too far?" or "When does sin actually become sin?"

In any case, let's look and see what Scripture says about this. Let's see how God defines marriage and why it would be wrong to live together before getting married.

The Bible describes marriage as a committed relationship between one man and one woman that is sanctioned and blessed by God (**Genesis 2:22-24**). Furthermore, God instituted marriage to be between two people, a male and a female. Jesus added that it is to be permanent (**Mark 10:7-9** – 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

The divine institution of marriage suggests a covenant among the man, the woman, and God. The marital relationship is more important than any other relationship except one's relationship with God. It is modeled after God's relationship with His people, the Church. Jesus is the bride-groom, and the Church is His bride. The unique, committed setting of marriage is also the place God designed for the expression of sex. In **1 Corinthians 6:15-18** (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 prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body), Paul discusses the sinfulness of all sexual relations outside of marriage. In addition to outward sinfulness, sexual sin is a sin against one's own body. This makes sexual sin uniquely destructive, a clear reason to follow God's plan for sex.

When it comes to living together before marriage, you may think you are fine just because you are "living together" and nothing more, but I would suggest that you are not. In the midst of living together, you are also opening the door to even more temptation between you two, and hurting any testimony you may have of following Christ as you proclaim that it is a God glorifying thing to live together before marriage. You are also in danger of leading others down a similar path towards sin because of your example (**Romans 14:13-22**).

⁴ <http://www.beforethecross.com/biblical-teachings/whats-wrong-with-living-together-before-marriage/>

Living together before marriage doesn't reflect the commitment that God instituted and ordained. The good news is that it is never too late to make a change. God forgives sin. That's what He's all about. He wants to have a relationship with us, and no situation or sin is too great for Him to forgive. If we want His forgiveness, we must stop committing the sinful act (**1 John 3:6** – No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him) and ask God for forgiveness. He will be faithful to forgive us (**1 John 1:9** – If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness).

Let me encourage you if you find yourself in this situation, there are plenty of ways to **change and repent from it**. There are plenty of people around you (including the Church) who can help you move out and wait patiently until you are married.

It's also possible that it might be time to just get married. You might even want to consider going ahead and getting married in the courthouse (which is legal and still in the sight of God) if you didn't want to wait for a larger ceremony, which you could always do down the road. The point here is to take sin as seriously as possible and make decisions starting today to remove yourself from sin or from being tempted to, and to follow Christ because He is so much better.

Let me also encourage you if you had this situation in the past, that you are forgiven in Jesus Christ, if you have repented over this sin. The finished work on the Cross paid the penalty for your past, present, and future sins and God no longer sees you, but rather sees His Son and what He did for you on the Cross.

We're Moving in Together!: A Christian Response to Unmarried Cohabitation⁵

JULY 29, 2010 BY TYLER SMITH

According to a poll taken by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2007, "Over 12 million unmarried partners live together in 6,008,007 households." The same poll indicated that the number of cohabiting unmarried partners increased by 88% between 1990 and 2007.[1] Other sources show that the majority of couples marrying today lived together before tying the knot.[2] Unless one has lived in a hole for the past hundred years, it is not difficult to observe the moral decline that seems to permeate the cultural horizon of America and the world. One thing is for sure: **Cohabiting has become the norm for unmarried couples.**

If we as Christians are to be responsible creatures, then we need to give thoughtful and intelligent responses to such a reality. How are Christians to react to those individuals who, with glee, announce for all the world to hear, "We're moving in together!"? Should we smack them over their heads with a Bible and pronounce judgment? This doesn't quite seem to be the most appropriate

⁵ <http://ggib.me/2010/07/29/we%E2%80%99re-moving-in-together-a-christian-response-to-unmarried-cohabitation/>

and tactful way to approach the situation. For many, this is a very important step in life. A new chapter of their lives is being unfolded before them. It is an exciting time for them and a huge leap forward in their relationship. Should we as Christians join them in their jubilation?

Surprisingly enough, this trend seems to be catching on not only among the non-Christian population but also among those who profess Christ (maybe these are the ones who need to be smacked over their heads with a Bible). Churches and Christian families must regularly deal with this dilemma. Christians—that is genuine Christians—stand beneath the authority of Scripture. We as Christians, therefore, are to consult Scripture for answers concerning life’s questions and all of life’s moral issues. The Bible does not explicitly say, “Thou shall not live together before marriage.” However, it does speak to this issue.

One must first recognize marriage as a divine institution and the proper and legally binding union between man and woman (Gen 2:18-25; Matt 19:5)—a union that is not to be broken (Mal 2:13-16; 1 Tim 4:3; Heb 13:4). But, more pertinent to this discussion, sex is not to be had outside of this marital union. **Fornication, the act of having sex outside of marriage, is clearly forbidden in Scripture** (Ex 22:16; Lev 19:29; 21:9; Deut 23:18; 1 Cor 6:18; 7:2; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3) **and even necessitated the death of both guilty parties in the Torah** (Deut 22:20-29).

But, what about Ms. Exception Suzy over here who thinks that she should be allowed to live with her boyfriend as long as the two of them aren’t having sex? There’s always one in the bunch; people always try to justify their misdeeds. Never mind the fact that I have never met a cohabitating couple who were not having sex, but I guess we should pay lip service to this hypothetical situation. I suppose we must entertain Ms. Suzy’s question. In principle there is nothing inherently sinful about the act of going to sleep in the same home with someone of the opposite sex. However, one must take into account other factors.

Some might be tempted to project their legalism at this point and call out for the individual to “abstain from all *appearances* of evil” (1 Thess 5:22). But, what does this verse really mean? Some see the Scripture here to be calling us to practice discerning wisdom, warning us to be shrewd and wise in abstaining from anything that might be perceived by the conscience as false or dangerous doctrine. John Calvin helps to clarify this point in his commentary on this verse:

“When [...] there is any fear of false doctrine, or when the mind is involved in doubt, it is proper in that case to retreat, or to suspend our step, as they say, lest we should receive anything with a doubtful and perplexed conscience.”[3]

However, Paul must not be understood to be calling sinners to abstain from what has the semblance or appearance of evil, if it is, in fact, a good thing. Jesus healed on the Sabbath and ate with tax collectors and sinners, actions that carried with them the appearance of evil but were in reality not things to be abstained from. They were in all actuality very good things.

But, we must continue and ask ourselves whether cohabitation before marriage is a *good* thing or not. Scripture tells us to “flee from fornication” (1 Cor 6:18) and that “because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband” (1 Cor

7:2). The point here is summed up well in Matthew Henry's commentary when he speaks of fornication. He says, "Avoid it, keep out of the reach of temptations to it, of provoking objects. Direct the eyes and mind to other things and thoughts."^[4] Paul is warning us that the temptation to commit sexual immorality is a strong one, and that we should take every precaution to rid ourselves of any enticement that might lead us into the sin of sexual immorality. How then, might I ask, would cohabitation be in line with the warning given here by Paul? That's just it; it is not in line with Paul's admonition. In fact, it takes Paul's words and tramples on them. **He who thinks he is strong enough to lie down next to a woman day in and day out without succumbing to sexual immorality or without even conjuring up lustful desires for her is a fool. He is playing with fire, and he thinks himself to be wiser than the Holy Spirit.**

He who professes Christianity and yet cohabitates with another needs to be brought under the discipline of his church. He needs to be lovingly instructed in the Scriptures and yet firmly called upon to repent of his sin and change his pattern of life. Churches need to encourage those repentant individuals to either part ways with their partners or, in some cases, move forward in marrying their partners. Much wisdom would need to be practiced here in counseling these individuals. In most cases, those who are not spiritually mature enough to realize their sin in cohabitation should not be encouraged to proceed with their marriage, but should rather be encouraged to postpone the event. They should first be disciplined in God's Word concerning doctrine, godly relationships, and Christ-centered marriages. At a later point, the prospect of moving forward in this marriage could be revisited.

So, we can conclude that cohabitation is clearly not an option for Christians, but that it is rather a sin. But, what are we to think regarding those who choose to cohabitate before marriage but do not profess allegiance to Christ? How are we to respond to non-Christians who gladly announce, "We're moving in together!"? If you spend much time around non-believing-twenty-somethings, then you will hear this statement uttered quite often. What are we as Christians supposed to say in response?... "How exciting!"... "Good for you!"... "This is such great news!"??? Is this how we should respond? Should we encourage unbelievers in their sin? Is it a good thing for unbelievers to pile up more sins for themselves and thus incur a greater judgment? No, no, and no.

What, then, should be our proper response? We should, in one sense, not expect non-Christians to submit to the Bible's authority; they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit and, thus, cannot obey the Bible. They do whatever their flesh pleases. They follow the logical conclusion of their hedonism, proclaiming that "nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be merry" (Eccl 8:15)—too bad their conclusion wasn't to "eat and drink and be *married!*"... Ahh, hold the applause; Corny joke; Sorry... Anyway, we should love them in the midst of their sin, realizing that it is our responsibility to judge those inside the Church and not those on the outside (1 Cor 5:12, 13). In another sense, however, we must call them to submit to God's authority. We realize what God's judgment will be for someone separated from Christ. We know that they will ultimately be judged, condemned, and punished for their sin, so we must not demonstrate hate to them by passively leaving them in their sin. Instead, we must seek to bring them into submission to the Gospel. **It seems natural that those of us whose tongues cannot wait to proclaim the name of Jesus and His Gospel, that those of us who are concerned about the souls of others, that those of us who are at all Great Commission minded would recognize this to be a great opportunity to explain to them**

what the Bible has to say about the matter. Maybe this could be our door into a Gospel conversation, which might lead to the conversion of a soul.

Each situation is unique. Couples considering premarital cohabitation may be moving toward this decision for a variety of reasons. **Some common reasons for cohabitation are as follows:** to test compatibility; to avoid divorce; to avoid a lifetime commitment and the legal hindrances that are associated with a divorce; it is a way for polygamists, polyamorists, and homosexuals to avoid breaking the law; it serves as a philosophical boycott of the institution of marriage because they see no difference between a commitment to living with one another and the institution of marriage; they consider their relationship to be a matter of privacy; and they seek to avoid the higher taxes required of two-income homes. The possible excuses are many, and each needs to be dealt with individually and analyzed in light of a Christian worldview. Underlying assumptions need to be uncovered, and sin needs to be exposed.

Ultimately, such sinful reasoning needs to be remedied through the Gospel. Sinful thoughts need to be exchanged for righteous ones. In the end, cohabitation is the result of a rejection of the authority of Scripture and a rejection of the authority of the objective moral law Giver. This should lead us as Christians to being intentional about engaging others with discussions about the Gospel, their need for a new heart that hates sin and fears God, and their need for a righteous Savior.

Living Together Before Marriage (Bible references)

Hebrews 13:4 ESV

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

1 Corinthians 7:1-40 ESV

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 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. 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.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 ESV

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

1 Corinthians 7:2 ESV

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

Genesis 2:24-25 ESV

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

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 ESV

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

Ephesians 5:5 ESV

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 ESV

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

2 Timothy 2:22 ESV

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Matthew 5:28 ESV

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 ESV

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

John 4:16-18 ESV

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

1 Corinthians 7:39 ESV

A 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.

1 Corinthians 6:18 ESV

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Matthew 5:32 ESV

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

1 Corinthians 6:13 ESV

“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Mark 7:21-23 ESV

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Proverbs 5:18-19 ESV

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 ESV

Abstain from every form of evil.

1 Corinthians 6:9 ESV

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

Ephesians 5:31-32 ESV

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

2 Corinthians 8:21 ESV

For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

John 8:34 ESV

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

Exodus 20:14 ESV

“You shall not commit adultery.

John 16:1 ESV

“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

Matthew 19:9 ESV

And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Revelation 21:8 ESV

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ESV

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been

defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.

Revelation 14:4 ESV

It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,

1 Corinthians 10:8 ESV

We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

Psalms 119:9 ESV

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

Mark 7:21 ESV

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,