

The Living Together Option

By Kurt Bruner, Pastor of Spiritual Formation

Prior to the 1970s it was rare for an unmarried man and woman to live together. Today it is much more common, accepted as an important “next step” for couples before committing to marriage. We often assume living together can help us avoid making a mistake that could lead to a painful divorce. But is that assumption correct? How should a follower of Jesus Christ view the living together option?

The Research

Over 75% of young single adults include marriage as a significant life goal. Couples who move in together, however, actually decrease the possibility of creating a strong marriage. The divorce rate among those who live together before marriage is 50% higher than it is among couples who don't. Extensive research conducted by University professor and psychologist Dr. Scott Stanley revealed that couples who live together undermine a strong bond by trying to keep their options open. While many of these couples eventually slide into marriage, their relationships demonstrate the lowest marital satisfaction and survival rates and report higher rates of domestic violence and unfaithfulness. When a cohabiting woman becomes pregnant there is a high probability the man will end the relationship within two years. Three-quarters of children born to unmarried couples will see their parents split-up before the child turns sixteen, dramatically higher than the one-third born to married parents. These children are also much more likely to experience abuse. The overwhelming conclusion of most research suggests that if your long-term goal is a happy marriage and family, living together is not the best path.

The Design

Christianity teaches that God designed physical intimacy to occur exclusively within the sacred commitment of marriage where the powerful bonding effects of sexuality draw the man and woman closer together. Outside of marriage, however, the bonding nature of sex confuses the relationship by implying a commitment that has not been made. Despite trying to avoid the pain of divorce, a breakup after sexual union creates similar emotional trauma. Trusting God's design and obeying

his call to honor marriage (Hebrews 13:4) and to avoid sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3) not only draws us into closer relationship with Him, but it brings clarity rather than uncertainty with one another.

The Church

Many couples first question the option of living together while exploring Christian faith or local church membership. This church would love to become a resource for clarity and health in your relationship because we believe marriage is a God-ordained, sacred institution. In Ephesians 5:31-33 the Bible describes the marital bond as a picture of the love between Christ (the groom) and the church (His bride). It is much easier to nurture a strong marriage while learning and growing with other believers—especially those who are a little further down the road. Couples who have been married for a while can provide guidance and input as you make decisions about romance and marriage. They can also serve as models, which is particularly helpful to those with parents who divorced or never married. Christian counselors and church leaders can also help you determine if you are ready to shift into pre-marital counseling or if you need to re-evaluate a potentially harmful relationship. In either case, we encourage you to seek wise counsel as you pursue a God-honoring marriage and family life.

GOING FURTHER – Resources

Recommended Books:

(Available from the HomePointe Center, the Bookstore at Lake Pointe or library check out.)

Before You Live Together (by Dave Gudel) a short book full of helpful insight to those who are experiencing or considering the option of living together.

The Ring Makes All the Difference: The Hidden Consequences of Cohabitation & the Strong Benefits of Marriage (by Glenn T. Stanton) With credible data & compassion, Stanton explores the reasons why the cohabitation trend is growing; outlines its negative outcomes for men, women and children; and makes a case for why marriage is still the best arrangement for the flourishing of couples in society.

GOING FURTHER - Lake Pointe Support

Pastoral Pre-Marital Counseling

Those ready to move past a temporary “trail run” and explore moving toward God’s design for marriage can schedule pre-marital counseling. If you do not have a relationship with a Lake Pointe pastor who will be conducting your wedding contact the office of Pastor Mason Randall at londab@lakepointe.org, 469-698-2388

Purposeful Engagement Class

This special series is offered several times throughout the year. To find out the next dates and location, contact David and Michella Burkhart at dmburkhart@verizon.net

Lake Pointe Weddings

For information on scheduling a wedding in a Lake Pointe facility contact Londa Boone at londab@lakepointe.org, 469-698-2388

Professional Christian Counseling

Lake Pointe provides on-site, Christ-centered professional counseling at fees low compared to comparable services in the community. For more information or to make an appointment, call 469-698-2250.

Living Together

Taking Next Steps

