

Living Together

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The facts are becoming more and more evident as I grow older that this world is a very wicked place to live. I am afraid that we quite often tend to regard our part of this world as just a little bit better than anywhere else. You can read about all kinds of problems and difficulties everywhere else but in your own back yard. But you and I both know that this is not a fair representation of the situation. The world is just as wicked right where you live as it is anywhere else. People are not any better just because they happen to live in a rural area rather than an urban one. Men take their sinful natures with them no matter where they go.

I was brought face to face with this reality not too long ago. You can read about the growing number of couples that are living together without the benefit of the marriage vow. And you can say to yourself: What is this world coming to? But when you meet a person who is doing just that, it puts quite a different light on the whole idea. This was my experience: I began working with a young person who was sharing an apartment with his girlfriend. And over the few months that we worked together, we got to be pretty well acquainted. And quite honestly, his living in sin was soon forgotten. It just didn't seem to be that important. Here lies a danger. Over a period of time, we tend to mold our views of the world to parallel those of everyone else.

Living together outside of the marriage bond is a terrible sin against the seventh commandment. But our world places no importance anymore on God's Law. It says we will do what is right in our own eyes. And I am afraid that we become conditioned just like the world to not think of sin as sin anymore.

Man sees marriage not as a divine institution of God, but as a human institution. From this it follows that since man designed the marriage state he can also do with it what he pleases. The result is that marriage is destroyed.

I do not have any fear that this whole issue of living together outside the marriage state will pose any problem for us as Christians, or specifically for you as Christian young people. We can indeed be thankful for that very fact.

However, the danger that this does hold for us is our gradual acceptance of it. If we were faced with a sudden change from marriage to cohabitation, we would all see it for what it is, a terrible violation of God's Law.

But if the change is gradual, so that it takes place over a period of years, the change does not seem so serious. And if we are conditioned to the fact that just maybe there are benefits and advantages to live-in arrangements before marriage or instead of marriage, then what is the next generation going to be faced with? It is our responsibility to recognize sin as sin.

We all know that such arrangements are wrong because of the testimony of God's Word and the Christian instruction provided by our parents. Can you imagine what could happen to your children when and if you take the attitude: So what, what difference does it make anyway?

No matter how attractive the world paints the picture of the live-in arrangement, the facts are just not there to back it up.

Surveys show that couples who live together before marriage quite often experience more difficulty afterward than those who don't.

One argument for living together minus legal ties is: If it doesn't work, no one will get hurt. That sounds pious. The only thing wrong with it is studies show that the emotional impact that the breakup of a living-together arrangement causes is similar to that of divorce. How can it be

otherwise? Anytime two people who love each other break up, emotional devastation is bound to occur. And by the very nature of things, the remorse, the regret, the feeling of betrayal is going to be greater for those who have, lived together than for those who have not.

A girl may move in with her boyfriend hoping that the relationship will grow and last. If the boy is only interested in a short-term arrangement, she may be in for a major heartbreak; and in the process may spoil her chance of having the love, security, and family of her dreams.

Another commonly used argument for living together goes something like this: "We're in love with each other, we're committed to each other, and we don't need a piece of paper to prove it." The argument is a poor one, but still attractive to those seeking justification for what they're doing. The other side of the argument is: If there's no difference in your relationship, what's wrong with adding a marriage license to prove your commitment?

Isn't it true that the primary reason why couples choose to live together rather than marry is to avoid the commitment and responsibility which marriage requires. Unwilling to make a lifelong commitment, they tailor their relationship to suit their convenience. Where is the "for better or for worse ... for richer or for poorer ... in sickness and in health?" What happens when someone else more attractive comes along? What happens when one partner gets sick and after months of struggle the other partner doesn't feel so good about the arrangement anymore?

You can say what you will, but the case against the live-in arrangement is a strong one. So strong, in fact, that there can be no doubt as to its wrongness.

Living together isn't the great adventure it has been acclaimed to be: first, because God prohibits it; second, because when you demand nothing from a relationship, that is exactly what you will get; third, because it is entered into out of weakness rather than strength, doubt rather than conviction, drift rather than direction. It is an open-ended covenant designed for those who are wanting to escape responsibility rather than accept it.

To sacrifice long-range goals for short-term pleasure can only lead to moral and spiritual corruption. It seems logical to me that the Christian young person who loves should be willing to commit himself to that love. These questionable life styles we are encountering today are only a means of running from love and responsibility, not to them.

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