

Going Deeper — What's Wrong With Living Together?

“By living together, we can see how we’ll get along when we’re married.”

Heard this one? It’s not true. Most couples who cohabit (live together outside of marriage) are more like dating partners than they are husband and wife. And living together often changes the way they feel about marriage (less enthusiastic) and about divorce (more accepting). Married couples rely on each other more and are less likely to walk out because they’ve made a permanent commitment to each other.

“But we are committed to each other — that’s why we’re moving in!”

Commitment is more than just sharing living space. It’s a deep and lasting bond that says, “No matter what, I’m sticking with you.” If you truly are committed to each other for the long haul, why wouldn’t you make it official? What’s holding you or your partner back?

Those who are really committed are willing to show it by going for that “piece of paper”: a marriage license.



“We’ll be less likely to end up in divorce court.”

This is accurate only if you consider the fact that 40 percent of live-ins never get married! For those who do get married, they have a 50 percent higher rate of divorce than married couples who don’t live together first. If you really want your relationship to last, why increase your risks that it won’t? In short, if you want to lessen the chance of divorce, don’t live together until you’re married!

“But we’ll be happier. And we won’t feel tied down.”

While it’s true that some married couples don’t live in bliss, it’s also true that couples who live together are, on average, far less happy than married couples. In fact, an article called “The Link Between Past and Present Intimate Relationships” printed in the *Journal of Family Issues* shows that married couples have fewer disagreements than couples who live together.

The marriage commitment results in a more complete and unreserved giving of oneself by both partners.

Research also shows that marriage offers better sexual and emotional fulfillment because of the security of commitment.

“Our children will be better off.”

The safest place for children is in a home where their parents are married to each other. Abuse rates are highest among children with unmarried parents. Marriage gives you and your future spouse the best chance at a great relationship, and the best chance that you’ll be there for your children.

“But we’re married in our own eyes.”

No, you’re not. You have specifically decided *not* to marry yet.

“We should live together before getting married to see if we’re compatible.”

People who use this argument also use another one you’ve probably heard: “You wouldn’t buy a car without test-driving it first, would you?”

Do you catch how that dehumanizes the other person? If you decide not to purchase a car, the vehicle doesn’t feel rejected. You don’t pack your personal luggage in the trunk of a car you’re only test-driving. And deciding not to purchase a car doesn’t bring emotional baggage into your next test-driving experience.

Think the car is going to need psychological counseling so it can trust the next driver? Think again.

This kind of reasoning leaves an easy out of a relationship. With this mind-set, your “incompatibility” will show up quickly.

The Bottom Line

By living with your boyfriend outside of marriage, you’re not only living in contrast to God’s will, but you can also place your future marriage in danger. What’s the ingredient that holds a marriage together? Common commitment and selfless love. That’s absent in cohabiting relationships. People who live together place a higher value on autonomy rather than commitment. Married couples, however, have made a commitment to stay together through the good and the bad. Don’t settle for less than what God desires. If it’s His will that you marry, refuse to compromise by simply shacking up together.

Some of the above information was taken from the booklet “Five Reasons You Need the ‘Piece of Paper’ ” published by Focus on the Family. To request your copy, call 1-800-A FAMILY.

This article appeared in [Brio and Beyond](#) magazine in February 2006. Copyright © 2006 Focus on the Family. All rights reserved. International copyright secured.