



Living Together

There are many people today living together without being married. A good question might be: "What's wrong with that?"

Without addressing the moral and biblical angle of the issue, let me talk about intimacy and why married (committed) couples can enjoy much greater intimacy than those unwilling to commit.

It reveals a lack of commitment

The primary reason people live together without being married is that one or both parties are unwilling to commit on a higher level. The cohabiting relationship allows them to check the other person out on a trial basis before deciding if they measure up. In other words, it's all about how good the other person is at making them happy and meeting their needs.

It also needs to be stated that people who live together have many more problems (abuse, infidelity, etc.) than married people and if they ever marry, they have a significantly higher chance of divorce. The reason is that their relationship is inherently self-centered and tentative.

It prevents true intimacy

Intimacy is the prize of marriage. Intimacy means "inner closeness." It means we are close on the inside and it manifests itself through deep friendship, great sex and the unhindered exchange of thoughts, dreams and ideas. It is the promised land of marriage. But how do we get it?

Intimacy always begins with real commitment. We just won't open our hearts to someone we fear might desert or forsake us. If we do, we end up being devastated. That is why marriage and commitment in marriage is so vital to intimacy. When we say, "Til death do us part" in our marriage vows it is very meaningful. It means, "I'm here to stay." That creates trust which leads to intimacy. Without that level of commitment, intimacy is elusive.

Even married people can communicate a lack of commitment. Threatening divorce when you have problems or refusing to face issues and work through them throws cold water on trust and intimacy. By the way, here is what God says to us in Hebrews 13:5: Let

your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

It undermines God's design for us

God is committed to us on the highest level. As it relates to breaking His relationship with us He uses the word "never." Also, God says He will never leave or forsake us. That means He will never physically leave us and will never turn His heart away from us. Both are very important because you can forsake a person you are physically committed to staying with. It's the old "lights are on but no one is home" scenario. Intimacy begins and ends with a genuine commitment to keep my body and soul connected and directed to the object of my affection.

So, back to the question about those who are living together without being married. What's wrong with it? It sentences a couple to a performance based relationship that most of the time ends in broken hearts and broken dreams. Marriage is better. It is a commitment based relationship that delivers true intimacy and satisfaction as long as our commitment remains solid.



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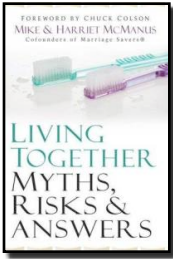
There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12).

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6)



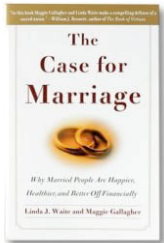
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Living Together: Myths, Risks & Answers

Mike & Carol McManus
ISBN 1416550984

In the pages of this book, you will discover that the divorce rate is actually higher among couples who live together before marriage, as well as important principles that really do give couples the necessary tools for a successful marriage.



The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially

Linda Waite & Maggie Gallagher
ISBN 978-0767906326

After sifting through the evidence and conducting their own studies, the authors conclude that marriage is beneficial and transformational, and that neither cohabitation nor swinging singledom are all they're cracked up to be. In fact, it turns out that marriage is a public health issue: being single can take almost 10 years off a man's life, while wifely nagging really is good for his health. Getting and keeping a wife can also increase a man's income as much as an education. Waite and Gallagher debunk a number of myths about marriage, including the one that says men get a better deal. Acknowledging that there may have been some truth to this in the past, better equity in modern marriages means that women make out just as well as men, though in different ways. Divorce—not marriage—is especially bad for women's health; parenting young children—not marriage—is the usual source of depression seen in mothers; and battering is significantly more common in cohabitating couples.

Small Groups for Couples at Long Hollow

You can find on-campus and off-campus groups that meet your needs by visiting longhollow.com/grow and clicking the button to Launch Group Finder Now.