

Co-habitation outside the bonds of marriage

From the beginning of creation God ordained the institution of marriage.

Genesis 2:23-24 (King James Version) And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (24) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (*See also Ephesians 5:31-32, Matthew 19:5-6)

Marriage is intended to be a union between a man and a woman and an extension of God's covenant with man.

Malachi 2:14 (King James Version) Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

When married you covenant with one another and through your sexual union become one. When entering into covenant you pledge yourselves to one another, everything is now "ours", nothing is separate, what is mine is yours. This is a reflection of the covenant that Jesus mediated for us, a covenant in which what is God's is ours and what is ours is His. Throughout scripture it is clear that marriage is God's design for the sexual and romantic relationship between men and women. The Bible clearly counsels against fornication and adultery. Sexual relations outside of marriage are clearly identified as sin and carries grave consequences.

1Corinthians 6:15-20 (King James Version) Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. (16) What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. (17) But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (18) Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (19) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. We were created sexual beings, for purposes of procreation and for enjoyment and fulfillment of desires. However this is reserved for marriage, as true sexual fulfillment and joy can only be experienced with true commitment i.e. a covenant relationship defined by the bonds of matrimony.

1Corinthians 7:1-3 (King James Version) Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. (2) Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. (3) Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

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When discussing the subject of co-habitation of an unmarried man and woman it is accepted that we are referring to a sexual relationship and a relationship that in all other respects resembles that of marriage, with no defined covenant commitment, and herein lies the problem.

Any sexual relationship outside of marriage is fornication and not to be practiced by followers of Christ. God's blessing is not on such a relationship as it violates His Word and He cannot bless something that He does not approve of. This means that the entire relationship is built on the wrong foundation, i.e. not the Word of God. Your relationship has no defined boundaries, responsibilities or accountability other than your own selfish feelings and considerations. When married God acts as a witness and mediator between the two parties and takes responsibility for your decision and covenant. By his Word and His Spirit He is able to help you and guide you in your relationship. When living together you forego this awesome advantage of having God as a party to your relationship.

Proverbs 18:22 (King James Version) Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

God is so serious about not committing fornication, that Paul even counsels for a couple to be married if they find it difficult to restrain themselves sexually.

1Corinthians 7:9 (King James Version) But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. **(Amplified Bible)** But if they have not self-control (restraint of their passions), they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame [with passion and tortured continually with ungratified desire].

Some couples live together before marriage with the intention and arrangement not to practice sex until married, many even engaged and soon to be wed. This however is not advisable and can do serious damage to the relationship. First of all it is not advisable to put yourself in a position where you could practice sex, purely because the opportunity presents itself on a continual basis. Proximity and privacy of this nature could quickly compromise your values. As you are romantically involved, sexual desire and tension is part of your relationship and living together will test your self control to the utmost and give occasion to the devil to tempt you and strain your relationship to breaking point.

Galatians 5:13 (King James Version) For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

A romantic relationship between a man and a woman was designed by God to involve courtship and gradual growth of intimacy as you become more familiar with one another. This relationship should involve some mystery, reserved for marriage and culminates in the act of sex. When living together you are already ahead in the level of intimacy you should be experiencing and that without the safety of a covenant. Secondly should you succeed in not having sex, you could by this very act make your mate feel undesirable or frustrated, to the

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point of this detrimentally influencing your future sexual relationship. A man was designed to conquer and a woman to be conquered sexually, that is why you are to wait for marriage and not burn with denied passion beforehand. It is unnatural for a man and a woman romantically involved not to desire sex and unwise to be so close to the fire for any length of time and not expect to fail.

Thirdly you are to live in such a manner as not to compromise your witness to both unbelievers and brothers and sisters in Christ.

Philippians 2:15 (King James Version) That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

Ephesians 5:15-17 (King James Version) See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (17) Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Romans 14:13 (King James Version) Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

You are to live and conduct yourself in such a manner that nothing you do or say hinders your witness as a child of God. Living together even if not enjoying a sexual relationship violates God's prescribed institution of marriage and as such compromises your walk and testimony.

It should also be noted that a sexual relationship is not just a matter of having sex, with penetration taking place. A couple can indulge in various acts of a sexual nature that does not necessitate penetration, but qualifies as a sexual act in terms of sexual gratification and intimacy.

Hebrews 13:4 (1901 American Standard Version) Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

When co-habiting your conscience will accuse you and you will be experiencing feelings of guilt and shame. You should guard your conscience by not allowing anything in your life that can condemn you before God.

1 Timothy 1:19 (King James Version) Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

Hebrews 13:18 (King James Version) Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. (*See also 1 Timothy 1:5)