

## Scriptures on Living Together Before Marriage *Ray Fowler*

**“The honeymoon was over before the wedding day ever arrived.”** (See the testimony below.)

What the Bible says about living together. Some of the Biblical teaching about living together before marriage.

The statistics showed a *high correlation between living together and undesirable outcomes*. This should not be surprising, because the Bible has some strong things to say about living together. God is a loving God, and he gives us his commands for our protection. Those who choose not to live together before marriage will likely avoid many of the negative outcomes described in the earlier post. Here are some **Scriptures on living together before marriage**:

- **Proverbs 14:12** – *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”* This Scripture stands against the arguments, “Everyone is doing it. It’s the new way. It’s accepted in society.” That may all be true, but just because a path seems right doesn’t make it so.
- **Ecclesiastes 3:1,5** – *“There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven ... a time to embrace and a time to refrain.”* As the following Scriptures indicate, the right time for living together is after marriage — not the year before, not the month before, not the night before. There is a time to embrace, and a time to refrain.
- **1 Corinthians 6:18** – *“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”* Living together almost always involves premarital sex. By living together before marriage, you dishonor both yourself and your partner.
- **1 Corinthians 7:8-9** – *“Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”* This isn’t the place to get into why Paul recommends singleness over marriage in this particular passage. However, it is important to note that the Bible encourages a couple that is struggling with sexual temptation to marry rather than burn with passion. Of course, this assumes a couple that is ready for marriage. I recommend that all couples get good premarital counseling from a pastor or Christian counselor before getting married.
- **Galatians 6:7-8** – *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”* Although the original word in the Greek means “to sneer or to scorn,” the English word “mock” is instructive when it comes to living together. “To mock” means “to imitate, to pretend in order to deceive.” You can’t do that to God without consequences, and you can’t do that with marriage. Living together is literally a mockery or imitation of marriage in that it does not require a public commitment or lifetime vow of faithfulness.
- **1 Thessalonians 4:3-6** – *“It is God’s will that you should ... avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him.”* To “wrong” someone in this verse means “to exceed the proper limits.” To “take advantage” means “to defraud, or to take more than you’re entitled to.” It is the picture of someone who takes more than they should while selfishly disregarding the best interests of others. When we live together, we exceed the limits God has set for us. We take more than we’re entitled to.
- **Hebrews 13:4** – *“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”* The marriage bed can only be kept pure when the sexual relationship is kept within marriage. Anything else brings God’s judgment. Do you love your partner? Then why would you invite God’s judgment into their life? Why would you willfully rob them of God’s blessing?

You will notice from these Bible verses that I am assuming couples who live together are also sexually involved. And I think in most cases that’s a pretty fair assumption. I will address the (much rarer) situation of couples who live together but are not sexually active in a later post. But let me end by sharing the **testimony of a young woman** that I think effectively sums up some of the major problems of living together before marriage.

I wish I could tell every young adult in America that you truly will reap what you sow. Living together may seem wonderful initially ... but eventually it creates more problems than you can imagine. I lived with my boyfriend for two years before we got married. I knew I was breaking my parents' hearts, as well as my Heavenly Father's heart! My boyfriend was not a Christian, but I figured I could change him if we moved in together.

The "this-is-yours, that-is-mine" mentality that enabled us to "successfully" live together completely unraveled once we got married. We had become too separate and selfish, making it nearly impossible to become "one flesh." The honeymoon was over before the wedding day ever arrived. (Excerpt from letter printed in "Family Feedback," Focus on the Family, May 1994, p.23)

## **Statistics on Living Together Before Marriage**

Here are some statistics on living together before marriage from Michael McManus, the president of Marriage Savers. Statistically speaking, living together is not a trial of marriage, but rather a training for divorce.

- The number of unmarried couples living together soared 12-fold from 430,000 in 1960 to 5.4 million in 2005.
- More than eight out of ten couples who live together will break up either before the wedding or afterwards in divorce.
- About 45 percent of those who begin cohabiting, do not marry. Another 5-10 percent continue living together and do not marry.
- Couples who do marry after living together are 50% more likely to divorce than those who did not.
- Only 12 percent of couples who have begun their relationship with cohabitation end up with a marriage lasting 10 years or more.
- A Penn State study reports that even a month's cohabitation decreases the quality of the couple's relationship.

Here are some more statistics relating to the children of cohabiting parents.

- Children of cohabiting parents are ten times more likely to be sexually abused by a stepparent than by a parent.
- Children of cohabiting parents are three times as likely to be expelled from school or to get pregnant as teenagers than children from an intact home with married parents.
- Children of cohabiting parents are five times more apt to live in poverty, and 22 times more likely to be incarcerated.