

15 Reasons Why You Should Reconsider Living Together Before Marriage (Cohabitation)

If you are considering moving in together with your partner, or are already living together, here are 15 reasons why you should reconsider your choice to live together before marriage. Most of them are taken from Chapter 13 of the book, [Singleness, Marriage, and the Will of God](#) by J Robin Maxson. I have included references with the abbreviation (SMWG). Some of these reasons and accompanying thoughts are my own.

1. It Puts You at Greater Risk To Give In To Sexual Temptation

Living together puts you as close as possible to having sex than any other living situation. Since the Bible clearly forbids sex outside of marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18-20, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 7:2, Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Thess. 4:3-4) you are placing yourself in the most difficult living situation possible to obey God sexually.

2. It Puts You At Higher Risk for Divorce and Separation

"Every research project that's ever looked at the stability of marriages that were preceded by cohabitation has found that people who lived together before they get married are significantly more likely to divorce later." - Linda Waite, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago (SMWG Pg. 234), Those who lived together before marriage have a 50 percent higher hazard rate of divorcing after marriage than couples who hadn't cohabitated (SMWG, Pg. 235) 80% of cohabitating relationships don't make it (SMWG, Pg. 236)

3. It Hurts Future Marital Health (SMWG, Pg. 235)

Studies comparing marital health of those who had previously cohabitated show that cohabiting before marriage results in:

Less interaction
More serious disagreements
More instability
Higher rate of divorce

4. It increases Likelihood of Sexual Unfaithfulness (SMWG, Pg. 236)

5. It Increases Likelihood of Domestic Violence

Incidence of domestic abuse is three times higher among cohabitators than among married partners, and the rates for severe violence are nearly five times higher for cohabitators. (SMWG, Pg. 236)

6. It Commonly Includes Differing Expectations

Studies indicate that it is not uncommon for men and woman to have differing attitudes and expectations about the nature of their cohabitating arrangement. Woman are more inclined to view moving in together as a stepping-stone to marriage, a precursor to engagement. Men don't tend to attach the same meaning. The dominant motivation for many men is convenience - available sex and shared expenses. (SMWG, Pg. 236) There can be little doubt that the number one reason why many couples continue in a cohabitating relationship, or break up, is that the man refuses to commit to marriage. (SMWG, Pg. 237)

7. It Puts Woman At a Disadvantage

The woman often finds she is doing more than her fair share of the housework and

paying more than her half of the expenses. A lot of women support their live-in boyfriends. If the couple has a baby, the burden for childcare falls disproportionately on her. And if the relationship breaks up, guess who gets to be a single parent. (SMWG, Pg. 237) In a relationship in which commitment is intentionally open-ended, "the balance of power tilts to the partner who is less committed and more likely to walk out." (SMWG, Pg. 237)

8. **It Puts Children At Risk**

Ironically, the very people who have wanted to spare their children the pain of divorce place them in greater jeopardy. For "fully three quarters of children born to cohabitating couples will see their parents split up before they reach age sixteen, compared to a third of those born to married parents." (SMWG, Pg. 238) By the Creator's design, the procreation and upbringing of children is one of the purposes of marriage. Children need to grow up in the security that a constant, permanent marriage relationship at its best affords. (SMWG, Pg. 240)

Cohabiting families tend to have higher rates of child abuse and violence. (SMWG, Pg. 238) It sets a bad precedent for your children's future relationships. They are going to follow your example.

9. **It Distorts love**

Permanence is at the heart of the biblical understanding of the reliable love that should characterize marriage. (SMWG, Pg. 240) Without the component of agape love (commitment/sacrifice), cohabitation remains essentially narcissistic, falling far short of the self-giving, self-sacrificial commitment that sustains genuine marriage. (SMWG, Pg. 240)

10. **It Limits Freedom**

Cohabitation appears to offer more freedom than marriage. If things don't work out, either partner is free to leave. But this freedom introduces fear and insecurity into the relationship. Such fear is destructive of real freedom, which grows best in the security of a loving, committed, permanent relationship...a man and woman are most free to become one flesh within the boundaries of marriage. (SMWG, Pg. 241)

11. **It Builds a Faulty View of Compatibility**

The mentality between cohabitating partners and married spouses is completely different. Cohabitators are *testing* compatibility; spouses are *building* compatibility. Cohabitators focus on *obtaining satisfaction* from their partners; spouses focus on *giving satisfaction* to their partner. The dynamics of commitment are also opposite: "Till death do us part" creates a very different relationship from "as long as I'm happy" or "until I get bored." Therefore, even a successful cohabitation is not a reliable predictor of a successful marriage. (SMWG, Pg. 241)

12. **It Builds Mistrust**

If she gave in to moral temptation with me before marriage, how do I know she won't do it with someone else after we get married." (SMWG, Pg. 241)

13. **It Produces Regret and Guilt**

Even though cohabitation has a wide cultural acceptance, individuals who live together may do so in violation of their own consciences. Maybe they are able to justify it, but they

still sense there is something wrong about it...The place where regret often intrudes is in the absence of a true honeymoon. This awareness may prompt one (or both) of the partners to realize how "opening the presents before Christmas" has taken away the wonder of what might have been. This sense of loss may develop into resentment toward one's spouse, especially if the other person initiated cohabitation or applied pressure to secure agreement. (SMWG, Pg. 242)

14. It Introduces Harmful Memories

If either spouse had a sexual relationship or cohabitated with one or more other partners, those experiences often invade and corrupt the experience of that partner in marriage. (SMWG, Pg. 242)

15. It Develops Unhealthy Patterns of Self-withholding

When people live together, and sleep together, without marriage, they put themselves in a position that is similar to the person being asked to give a blank check. They either hold back on their partner by not giving the full self in the sexual act and in their shared lives together. Or, they feel scared a lot of the time, wondering whether their partner will somehow take advantage of their vulnerability....No one can simulate self-giving. Half a commitment is no commitment. Cohabiting couples are likely to have one foot out the door, through the relationship. The members of a cohabiting couple practice holding back on one another. They rehearse not trusting." - Jennifer Roback Morse (SMWG, Pg. 243)