

A CONVERSATION ABOUT COHABITATION
Sermon Series: Truth — How Do You Know It When You Hear It?
Next Steps Devotional Guide
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Instructions: This devotional guide can be used individually, by families or in a small group as a way to reinforce the biblical truth you learned from the sermon. If you are using this at home, spread the points throughout the whole week. If you are using this in a small group, divide people up into sub-groups to discuss and share and bring them back to the whole group to share. Do not force anyone to share. Be sure to pray in your group.

1. Think back to when you were younger and your parents and grandparents were young, what lifestyle choices were considered wrong, immoral or illegal that today are either accepted and/ even legal. What changed and why do think things changed?
2. Read John 6:61, 66 and Mark 4:9 in your sermon notes. What is it about Jesus' teachings and the Bible that causes many people to "walk away" from it rather than apply it to their lives?
3. Read Hebrews 13:4 in your sermon notes (both translations listed).
 - a. Celebrities seem to go through relationships and marriages quickly. Yet, this is not just limited to them. Read the following quote: *"One person describes marriage as a three-ring circus – first comes the engagement ring, then comes the wedding ring, and then comes the suffer-ring."*¹ Why do you think so many people have such a negative view of marriage?
 - b. But perhaps the greatest attack on marriage has come in the modern acceptance of couples living together outside of marriage. The numbers are staggering. 430,000 couples were living together in 1960. By 2020 over 9,000,000 were living together. In 1970 11% of newlywed couples lived together before marriage. By 1993 that percentage had increased sixfold (2/3s of newlywed couples living together before marriage.)² What do these stats on the number of couples living together tell you and how can the church reach and minister to these couples?
 - c. Should the church not mention God's view on living together? Should the church simply accept what is without biblical teaching on this issue? Why or why not?
4. You were presented 3 major reasons why couples should not live together prior to marriage.
 - a. Read Jesus' words in Mark 12:30-31 and John 14:15, 21 in point #1 in your sermon notes. Is love for God enough motivation to keep couples from living together prior to marriage? Why or why not? If it is enough, explain how that is true?
 - b. Read Hebrews 13:4 in your sermon notes in point #1. "Honor" is something you do not hear much about today, except maybe in a courtroom. Read the explanation for the Greek New Testament word [τίμιος; timios] translated as "honor." With this explanation, what is Hebrews 13:4 saying?
 - c. Read 1 Corinthians 7:23 and Genesis 2:23-25 in your sermon notes in point #1. It has been said: *"God instituted marriage first because it was basic and essential to all else that would follow. History shows that most nations rise or fall on the strength of their families."* What is your response to this statement?
5. The main passage for this sermon is Hebrews 13:4. Read the explanation for the Greek New Testament words translated as "marriage bed," and "pure" in Hebrews 13:4. Why do you think our culture does not see these explanations as a viable option?
 - f. God is the Creator of marriage. When He established it, He called the covenant between a husband and wife "one flesh." How does adultery violate this covenant?
 - g. God calls any sexual activity outside of marriage sexual immorality. It is a broad term that includes premarital sex, homosexuality, incest, pornography and prostitution. A couple who chooses to live together violates God's design for marriage and God calls this sexual immorality. When couples who live together say, *"Well, we're married in God's sight. We don't need a piece of paper to tell us we are married."* The Bible warns us against merely telling people *"what their itching ears want to hear"* (2 Timothy 4:3). What kind of response could you give to a couple that lives together that does not "tell them what their itching ears want to hear?"
 - h. One of the reasons so many couples choose living together rather than getting married is they have seen so many married couples divorce, stay together but not have much of a marriage and experience the hurt of adultery. What we need are marriage mentors. Marriage mentors have 3 assets: time; love for each other and God; wisdom gleaned from years of marriage of God's blessings. Do you know couple who would be great marriage mentors? How about yourself? If so, please let me, Pastor Kelly, know.
 - i. The late great film maker Cecile B. DeMille (ex. The Ten Commandments) said this, *"We don't break God's commands; rather, they break us."* Read the stats on the affects of living together under point #1 in your sermon notes. What do these tell you about what DeMille says?

¹ <https://vision.org.au/the-word-for-today/associated-blog/the-word-for-today-devotional-content/bound-by-a-commitment-to-love/>.

² Mike & Harriett McManus, Living Together: Myths, Risks & Answers.

- j. Couples that live together cannot experience “one flesh” as God intended. Why? The Hebrew word itself connotes permanence — a lifetime commitment that protects and insures that. Couples who live together still see themselves as individuals. Men and women live together for different reasons. Research shows that women live together in the hope of marriage; men live together for sex and to save money. This is why when the relationship fails, the woman feels used and embittered and the man is after is next woman. Does this help in being an advocate for marriage? If so, how?
6. Couples who live together also dishonor their love for each other and set themselves up to experience the judgment of God unless they repent. People live together for all kinds of reasons other than “love”: save money, see if they are compatible, the sex is more accessible, they don’t want to be lonely, and etc.
 - a. Read 1 Corinthians 6:18, Ecclesiastes 3:1, 5 and Proverbs 14:12 in your sermon notes under point #2. Living together robs couples of God’s blessings? Which blessings is that?
 - b. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 in your sermon notes in point #2 as well as the explanations for the Greek words translated into English (i.e., “sanctified” and “wrong”). How does living together do this?
 - c. Read Galatians 6:7-8 and 1 John 1:10 in your sermon notes in point #2.” (i.e., see John 8:44 in your sermon notes under point #2). Research shows that for most men who live together, the reason is sex and to save money. For women, it is the hope of marriage. Living together has all the benefits of marriage without the commitment. The commitment is the bond or glue that holds the relationship together to create intimacy and depth. How would you help a couple who comes to you about living together see this?
7. A third reason couples, especially “Christian” couples should not live together is because they are rebuking and denouncing their parents and church family.
 - a. Read 1 Proverbs 10:1, Exodus 20:12 and Proverbs 17:25 in your sermon notes under point #3. “Christian” children are to honor their Christian parents all the days as their (i.e. children) lives. Children are a blessing and gift from the Lord, but they can also bring great hurt, stress, and pain. Where have you see this?
 - b. Read Genesis 39:6-9 in your sermon notes under point #3. Joseph was 17-years-old. Why do you think he refused Potiphar’s wife’s sexual approaches?
 - c. Read John 8:4-11 in your sermon notes under point #3. This story is about the woman caught in adultery. It is clear Jesus was angry with the judgmental mob, yet what do you take from Jesus’ full statement in verse 11?
 - d. In John 4, there is a story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus was compassionate with her. Read John 4:29 in our sermon notes under point #3. Why do you think this woman responded to to Jesus’ gentle rebuke for living with an unmarried man with conviction to change and bring others to listen to Him?
 - e. There are couples who say, “*We will live together but abstain from sex.*” Living together, sharing a house, sharing a bed is not the best way to overcome temptation. God’s truth tells to flee temptation, not run towards it (i.e. verses are listed in your sermon outline). Why do you think couples who promise to “abstain from sex,” but still live together, are vulnerable and missing God’s blessings?
 - f. We are to be light in the darkness and salt in this world. We have a witness and a testimony to share. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 in your sermon notes in point #3. How is living together a poor witness for Jesus Christ?
 - g. Living together mocks God and marriage. It trivializes marriage. It takes away marriage’s uniqueness. It pretends to be marriage. And therefore, it dishonors marriage and goes against the principle of *Hebrews 13:4a: “Let marriage be honored by all” (NIV)*. How is this true?
 - h. How can you help a couple who lived together before marriage and now desires to honor God, deal with the guilt and shame of what they did? What would be your response to a cohabitating couple asking to get married in a church?
 - i. How can the church do a better job at premarital counseling, teaching our youth and college age to establish godly covenants in their dating relationships? Years ago, Audrey and I used a book called, *I Kissed Dating Good-bye* by Joshua Harris.
 - j. Other things we can teach this younger generation is relational and listening skills. The book, *Living Together: Myths, Risks and Answers* offers some excellent suggestions on covenants that help singles “flee temptation,” developing relational and listening skills, learning skills to deal with conflict, future in-laws, finances and more. We need godly role models, godly mentors who can do this. 1 Timothy 4:11-12 says this, “*Command and teach these things . . . set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity*” (NIV). How can we do this either as marriage mentors or as people in the church? It is not enough to have an older couple who has been 30 or more years as mentors. There must be evidence of Jesus’ words in Mark 12:30-31. Who do you know you could recommend as such a couple?
 - k. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 says, “*Test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. ²²Stay away from every kind of evil*” (NLT). It has been suggested that if a couple who lives together wants to test to learn if their relationship will last, the best way to know that is to move apart. Live in separate locations and abstain from sexual relations. How is this a right biblical approach? If you disagree, why?
 - l. Ezekiel 33:6 says, “*If the watchman sees the enemy coming and doesn’t sound the alarm to warn the people, he is responsible for their captivity*” (NLT). How is the church and individual Christians responsible in helping people choose a biblical worldview of truth rather than a culture worldview of opinion when it comes to this issue of living together and marriage?