

Our society does not see anything wrong with a couple living together without being married. It is presented favorably by celebrities and non-celebrities alike. While the Bible does not directly address cohabitation, it does address an activity that the cohabitating couple engages in, i.e., premarital sex. God's Word speaks out very clearly against premarital sex. The Biblical term which addresses this issue is "fornication" and it refers to any sexual activity outside the boundaries of marriage.

THE BIBLE AND PREMARITAL SEX

Before we look at what the Bible has to say about premarital sex, there are several significant truths that should be brought up from a societal standpoint. Research has shown that:

- a.) Those that are sexually active before marriage are much more likely to divorce;
- b.) Those that have had premarital sex are more likely to have extramarital affairs as well;
- c.) Those having premarital sex may be fooled into marrying a *person who is not right for them*;
- d.) Those that live together do not experience the best sex.¹

¹ Points excerpted from Leadership University, Sociological Reasons Not to Live Together,

A brief examination of the Scriptures reveal God's viewpoint concerning premarital sex.

1. This is an activity engaged in by those who have turned away from God (Rom. 1:29).
2. When God's people are involved in this activity they are not glorifying the Lord with their bodies (1 Cor. 6:13-18).
3. If a man and a woman are having premarital sex they should stop having sex or get married (1 Cor. 7:2).
4. When a couple is involved in premarital sex, this is an indication that they are not able to control their fleshly desires in this area (Gal. 5:16-21).
5. God commands His people to not have premarital sex (Eph. 5:1-5; 1 Thes. 4:3).
6. God does not bless the relationship where premarital sex is involved (Col. 3:5-6; Heb. 13:4).

THE BIBLE AND COHABITATION

As far as a couple living together without having sex is concerned, the Bible indirectly addresses this issue.

1. God created the institution of marriage,

<http://www.leaderu.com/critical/cohabitation-socio.html>,
[Accessed on May 22, 2008]

not cohabitation, as His plan for a man and a woman to intimately share their lives with one another (Gen. 2:18-25). There are two things to be noticed in this passage. First, there was a formal public acknowledgement before God on the part of Adam to receive Eve as his helpmate, "this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (2:23). Marriage is a public acknowledgement before God that two individuals are entering into a covenant before Him to share their lives together. Second, the man was instructed to leave father and mother, be joined to his wife, and become one flesh (2:24). In the act of marriage the couple makes a threefold commitment. 1.) They agree to a commitment in which their relationship with each other is their most significant one; 2.) They make a commitment to be joined together with their mate; 3.) They make a commitment to integrate their lives together in every part.

2. As far as a relationship between a man and a woman, God says that marriage is "honorable" or "held in high esteem" (Heb. 13:4). Anything less than marriage (e.g. cohabitation) is dishonorable in the eyes of the Lord.

3. Marriage is an indication of a commitment on the part of the husband and the wife (Song of Sol. 2:16). "Marriage confirms the mutual commitment and bonding of a man and woman by specifying and guarding certain expectations and responsibilities. In cohabitation, by way of contrast, there is mutual exploitation within the possibility of

potential flight. And that does not tend to promote strong and lasting relationships.”²

4. When two believers live together, they give the appearance of being married. If there is another couple who is weak in their faith with their eyes on them, they can become a stumbling block to them (Rom. 14:13).

5. Christians who live together without being married are turning something that honors God (marriage) into something that dishonors Him. Scripture admonishes us that we should abstain from all appearances of evil (1 Thes. 5:22).

WHY HAVE A MARRIAGE CEREMONY?

The Bible has no direct teaching on what should be involved in a marriage ceremony, nor does it tell how the ceremony should be conducted to make it a valid transaction. However, marriage has always been a public *event*. There has always been a specific point at which persons were recognized as being married. The Bible has specific regulations about the sins of adultery and fornication. It is assumed that the community will know who is married and who is not married. Marriage is not a private affair. It takes place within the community. And the Christian is a member of a special community--the Body of Christ. Our entire

life (including our role in marriage) is lived out as a member of this special community. In the wedding ceremony, the couple makes pledges in the presence of family, friends, the church, the state, and God. When this commitment has been expressed--then the man and woman are ready for physical consummation. This pattern is in harmony with the teaching found in God's Word.

A public marriage ceremony demonstrates that we take seriously our responsibility to a larger society-including our friends, family, neighbors, and fellow Christians. We do not live to ourselves. We live as members of a community whose approval is important, whose love is desired, and whose reputation is esteemed. A marriage which occurs under God, before an audience, and ratified by the laws of the state is a strong statement of intention. It says that the couple intends to worship God, to contribute to the welfare of the community, and to put the commitment to persevere in the marriage on public record.³

³ Brethren Revival Fellowship, On Living Together Before Marriage, editorial
<http://www.brewitness.org/Articles/1995v30n5.htm>,
September/October, 1995, Volume 30, Number 5 [Accessed on May 22, 2008].

THE BIBLE AND COHABITATION



by
Dr. William R. Glaze

² Ibid.