

Live-In Lifestyle

Live-in or cohabitation is the situation of those who live together in a sexual relationship but are not married. It has been predicted that by the year 2012 nearly one half of all families in the USA would include unmarried couples living together. In 1990 thirty (30%) percent of students in American college campuses reported that they had lived with someone of the opposite sex for at least a week. The live-in lifestyle covers a wide variety of relationships from temporary and casual arrangements of convenience to more committed lifelong substitutes for marriage.

Some people believe that the rising incidence of live-in is due primarily to a general breakdown in personal morality. Others see it as an assortment of broader social forces contributing to its upswing. The changing sexual values and patterns, the emphasis upon individual human growth, the liberalization of living arrangements on college campuses, the phenomenon of extended adolescence and later marriage, more effective contraception, and the high cost of living are all factors which encourage cohabitation.

Most Christians stand firm against live-in and are more than slightly alarmed by its increasing frequency and its almost routine social acceptance. The moral problem of unwed people living together is grounded in the historical Christian belief that sexual activity outside marriage is an offense against God's law and a disservice to one's partner. Nevertheless, many people who cohabit outside marriage claim to hold positive views toward marriage. They justify their actions by asserting that love is the key ingredient of their relationship and a marriage license contributes scarcely anything to that love.

While Christians have usually insisted that sexual activity must be nurtured by love, they have also maintained that its most sublime meaning is achieved when it is linked to marriage. This view has emerged from the belief in God's extraordinary activity in creation and consequent unique alliance with humans. When the world was commanded into being, God determined that human relationships would be guided by structured obligations so that the world might not revert to an enslaving social chaos and disorder (Gen. 2:15-25).

Throughout the Scriptures, God's relation to humans is described in covenantal terms with recognizable concrete stipulations. Human life is placed upon a moral footing and is fulfilled by the faithful exercise of stated responsibilities. Relationships between humans are likewise depicted as covenantal, with mutual responsibilities arising from contractual commitments. God designed man to take responsibility and make a strong commitment to carry out every responsibility.

These human covenants acquire their power and durability because they spring from God's covenant-making activity (1 Sam. 20:8-23). One corollary of this suggests that God created the state and its legal authority to provide the means whereby these human covenants might be fulfilled (Romans 13:1-7). God instituted marriage and people must honor it. Marriage is one of the more significant legal covenants which God has provided.

Thus, the claim is only partially true that human ties are made in heaven apart from the concrete legal arrangements. Rather they are also made on earth, as affirmed by volitional responsibility under the divine institution of marriage. The divine establishment of volition, marriage, family and government were designed for human protection and good welfare on this planet.

The God-ordained and government provision of a marriage contract does not diminish the element of love in a couple's relationship, as is often implied by the live-in partners. On the contrary, the Bible portrays the concept of love itself in covenantal terms. Thus, one of the Hebrew words for love (*hesed*) is often translated "loyal love" or "steadfast love," and is occasionally found in the idiom "covenant and steadfast love" (Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Deut. 7:9).

Rather than stifling a couple's relationship, this type of covenantal love actually liberates it. At its highest point marriage provides mutual emancipation within the boundaries of certain expectations, responsibilities, and loyalties; thus only marriage can permit the most mature expression of love to develop. The mature expression of love is based on Bible doctrines in the souls of the married couple. A live-in partner, on the other hand, permits mutual exploitation within the context of potential flight.

God's original command in creation was that male and female "cleave" to one another in covenantal partnership, or marriage (Gen. 2:24). This bond bestowed meaning upon their sexual activity as expressed by the phrase "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). It highlights the complete interchange of the two beings, as in the bride's delightful declaration in the Song of Solomon, "My beloved is mine and I am his" (2:16).

Sexual experience, as a pleasurable expression of a couple's bond, is the recurring sign of their mutual self-giving, and this includes the physical, moral, spiritual, and legal dimensions. In the New Testament the apostle Paul infuses meaning to sexual experience within marriage by deriving it from the "hidden truth" of Christ's total love for His bride, the church, and the church's resulting loyal love to Him (Eph. 5:32).

A link exists between these biblical traditions and subsequent cultural expressions of love, sex, and marriage. Thus, in the West it is nearly impossible to escape the layers of moral and legal implications that underlie these activities. At its deepest level sexual pleasure is a presentation of the self to the other person in a way that culturally symbolizes mutual commitment and bonding. Marriage affirms this by specifying and guarding certain expectations and responsibilities.

This does not happen, however, in the live-in partnership. Thus far, all research has shown that, on the whole, cohabiting couples evidence less commitment than those who marry. Live-in is a form of social interaction which may communicate that a couple might be important to each other, but they are not so important that they wish to leap into a relationship of intimacy and permanence. In live-in sexual expression is a structurally false symbol of a totally committed relationship outside the bounds of marriage.

Many Christians believe that the church should respond to the live-in lifestyle by neither condoning nor condemning the people who practice it. Rather it should oppose those questionable social forces which tend to encourage and even subsidize it.

In this view parents, relatives, friends, and the church are urged to continue a gospel ministry of care to those engaged live-in partnership is cohabitation outside of marriage, helping the couple to deal with their own individual circumstances, while addressing the broader social trends which tend to perpetuate this life style.

Those in poverty use their economic situation to justify their cohabitation without a marriage contract, and yet, some manage to have admirable relationship tested by pressures of several decades. The marriage contract is not the solution but the reality of love between the husband and wife. For some, especially teen-agers and college students, live-in is for sexual experience that lasts only for several days.

They are simply roommates and nothing else which may result to teen-age pregnancy, teen-age marriage, illegitimate children and various social problems. The rapid increase in live-in cases is just a social indication of a deep-rooted spiritual corruption in our society. This is a symptom of widespread rejection and ignorance of Bible doctrine. People in general are spiritually sick (Jer. 17:9) and incapable of making good decisions. The only effective, workable and acceptable solution is from God. The biblical teachings related to sex, love, dating, marriage and spirituality are essential for every growing child. The child without Bible doctrine in the soul will soon become an adult that manufactures a lot of problems for himself and for those around him.

Marriage provides:

- The basis for order in the human race
- It provides boundaries for sex
- It provides a stable environment for our children

Love is the foundation for marriage and should be the basic concept for marriage. Sex is one of the many expressions of this love. Mental attitude love in marriage finds many areas of expression, such as conversation, companionship, graciousness, and sex. This is compatible with the concept of spirituality. The filling of the Holy Spirit produces a mental attitude of love, which finds many areas of expression in the Christian way of life.

Our love-happiness must precede our sex-happiness. There must be first the touching of souls, before there is an enjoyable touching of bodies.

The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. Ephesians 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and he is the savior of the body." Leadership entails responsibility, the major responsibility in every home lies with the husband. The husband is commanded to love his wife. Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it."

Man initiates, the wife's love should be responsive and receptive. The real adjustment in marriage is in the area of the mental attitude. Since marriage is founded on mental attitude love, the older you become, the more wonderful marriage should be. Man must be the head of the home, the Word of God must be the criterion for the operation of the home and the family.

The wife is never commanded to love her husband. The wife is to be "taught" to love her husband. Titus 2:4, "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children." This is rapport love, responsive love, which proceeds from her husband's initiation of love. The wife is to be a help-meet, literally, helper of the same species, to her husband (Gen. 2:18-22). The woman fulfills the man; the man is complete by having the woman (1 Cor. 11:7-12). The husband's love, both mental and physical, should be pre-dominantly aggressive and protective.



LIVE-IN LIFESTYLE

COHABITATION BEFORE \wedge MARRIAGE
(without)

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Tract No. 73
Live-in Lifestyle
Cohabitation Before or Without Marriage