

Keystone Church: Position Paper

Cohabitation

Biblical marriage is a formal commitment and covenant resulting in a man and a woman becoming one family that can only be separated by death (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6). Becoming “one flesh” involves sexual intercourse which is to be enjoyed only within the covenant of marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18).

The Bible says that marriage is to be honored and a person’s sexual life should be kept pure (Acts 15:20; Hebrews 13:4; Galatians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 6:13-20; Ephesians 5:3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Because the rate of divorce has grown exponentially, cohabitation before marriage has become a popular alternative in society and increasingly in the church. The opportunity to “test drive” a relationship sounds like a good idea before making the commitment of marriage.

In reality, the negative consequences of cohabitation are validated in secular studies. While beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning as a reason to reconsider cohabitation.

At Keystone Church we value living and acting to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). This obviously extends to the covenant of marriage, and the commitment to sexual purity. For that reason, we submit ourselves to Scripture which unambiguously declares that all sex outside of the marriage relationship is overtly sinful behavior.

Keystone extends this expectation to unmarried couples spending the night/ traveling together and non-sexual cohabitation. The Bible addresses these forms of cohabitation with two clear warnings. First, they invite temptation. How inappropriate it would be to pray “lead us not into temptation” when we willingly reside in a tempting environment (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38).

Furthermore, the Bible has a lot to say about our behavior from the perspective of the world. Even if cohabitation did not present the problem of temptation to sexual immorality, we still want to display the radical call to discipleship which flows out of our belief in the gospel to the world at large (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

There are an abundance of Scriptural themes and commands which should cause those who love the Lord Jesus to gladly and humbly abstain.

Therefore, it is Keystone pastors practice not to marry a couple who continue to cohabitate, nor will they be able to use our church facilities. We ask that couples who are living together, even those not having sex, move into separate homes from one another until after the wedding.

In those instances where cohabitation seems to be a necessity for financial or other reasons, we highly encourage couples to think through whatever other options might be available. Where the situation seems hopeless, please speak with the church to see if there are ways we can help. Our encouragement to you is don't allow the harsh realities of life and circumstances to give a foothold for sin in your life.

It is our observation that couples that honor the Lord in every aspect of their relationship, experience greater oneness, peace and joy in marriage. If you are currently cohabitating or have questions about cohabitation, talk to your Connection Group leader, or make an appointment with one of the pastors at Keystone.