

6 Reasons Living Together Doesn't Work by Danielle Peters May 21, 2013

Today isn't for the married ladies. And since I'm guessing that is who usually reads my stuff, I'm hoping you'll relate to this...and then forward it to your favorite single girlfriend. Particularly that girlfriend who's living with her man.

I was that girl. Twenty-one years old and only one year into my career as a Design Engineer for a telecom company, I was laid off, and so was my boyfriend of two years. We each had our own apartments, adorably situated about a 1/2 mile apart...and let's be real, his was barely used anyway. Unless it was laundry day. Otherwise, we were always at my place. So, when finances were going to get tight, we thought "Let's be fiscally responsible and move in together." That boyfriend did become my husband. We lived together 9 months before we got engaged, and 2 years before we got married. Even bought a house together a year before the wedding date. But, 9 years into marriage, having lived through some of the struggles that came as consequences to our earlier choices as a couple, that is one decision that I would NOT have made (and my husband says the same thing).

Now, here is where you are saying, "Why? So many couples live together before they marry in our world today. What is the big deal?" Very true. So many couples do live together before they marry. Not just in the world, but also in the church. Not just the young couples either, but also those that are entering their second marriages later in life.

Today, I will share with you what I share with the couples (particularly the ladies) that come through the Marriage Preparation class my husband and I teach.

(1) You can't "try out" commitment. That is a completely ironic rationalization. Couples think they can "try out" this marriage thing by living together, but that doesn't work because marriage is about more than sharing an address, or expenses, or a bed. Marriage at its core is all about the commitment.

(2) Your needs are important too. Do you know what the top need of women typically is in a marriage? Security. Commitment. These are the deep desires of our hearts as women that draws us to look for that man to share our lives with. His top needs? Physical responsiveness, companionship, domestic support (yes, he *needs* someone to help him keep a home. If you need evidence, head to the nearest bachelor's pad). A living-together relationship is more likely to meet his needs than yours.

(3) It sets a norm for selfish living. This was very evident in my relationship, particularly on my side of things. I relished in my independence as a young woman...my career, my calendar, my friends, my choices. I didn't need to consult my boyfriend on these things, even when we were living together. But my husband? Well, he expected to be consulted, or at the very least be considered. A successful marriage means considering your spouse above yourself. Being willing to make selfLESS decisions, and this is not the culture created in most living-together relationships.

(4) You shouldn't have to "earn" the ring. And that is how many girls are left feeling. Marriage requires unconditional love, but living together creates a performance-based love. Be a good girlfriend. Do all the wife-like duties. Don't be too much of a nag or a bore or let your body lose it shape. And maybe he'll decide you are good enough for the real deal.

(5) You are more valuable than that. What happens when the man decides not to marry the live-in girlfriend? She starts to question her value. "Why am I good enough to live with, but not good

enough to marry?" Start thinking that you are TOO valuable to just live with. Beyonce had it right. If he likes it, then he should put a ring on it! You are worth that. If he doesn't think so, then he isn't worth it.

(6) If you want God's favor, you've got to follow God's ways. Bottomline...living together is sinful. I don't say that is a judging way, but instead as one who has had to go through a journey of realization and repentance for my own sinful choices. We watch as each of these couples come through our class looking for God's favor on their marriage. They don't want their marriage to go the way of the world, to a miserable existence or to end in divorce, yet they are following the world's way into marriage. If you want God's favor, you've got to follow God's ways.

If we were to put our rational thinking caps on for a moment and consider that deciding to cohabitate with our man before marriage would lead to a lower level of marital satisfaction and put us at a much higher risk for divorce, is that the decision we would make?