**Marriage: Optional - Disposable – Re-definable?**

**Dennis Franck, Coach, Consultant, Speaker**

Before 1970, it was called “living in sin” or “shacking up” and was illegal in every state of the union. Today only seven states have laws making unmarried cohabitation illegal, although they rarely enforce it. Cohabitation has **sky rocketed** since 1990:

**U.S. Unmarried – Partner Households:**

* **2012 - 7.8 million - 15.6 million people**
* **2000 - 5.5 million – 11 million people**
* **1990 - 2.8 million - 5.6 million people**
* 1100% increase since 1975
* Over half of all marriages are preceded by cohabitation
* Senior single-again adults cohabitate due to financial penalty of marriage
* 21 % of all unmarried-partner households include children

-*America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2012* –Step Family Association of America

**Reasons Couples Cohabitate Include:**

* + Anti-marriage sentiments -Hope of marriage
  + Financial reasons -Lack of stigma
  + Easy access to sex -Conformity to social pressure
  + Prove compatibility -Avoid divorce

**Is Culture Speaking Louder Than the Church?**

The church needs to be aware of this growing trend and respond accordingly! Non-Christians are not the only people cohabiting. Many pastors no longer preach against cohabitation for fear of offending someone, and as a result, people may hear only signals of silence from the Church, and signals of “GO” from culture! The Church needs to teach biblical and ethical reasons and benefits of waiting till marriage to live with a partner.

* Principles of wise mate selection
* Importance of life commitment to marriage (Matthew 19:6)
* Higher divorce rate for those who cohabitate
* Consequences of sex outside of marriage & a lifetime commitment (immoral memories, pain of break up, pregnancy, venereal diseases, children unprepared for, sexual disillusionment, mistrust/distrust of opposite sex etc.)
* Biblical foundations of & reasons for marriage (Genesis 2:18-26)

Recommended Resource:

Living Together - Myths, Risks & Answers **- Mike & Harriet McManus**

<http://www.marriagesavers.org/sitems/Contact/biography.htm>

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