

God's Design for Living Together

Over the past fifty years, American attitudes toward marriage have changed dramatically. In 1975, the median age for a first marriage was 23.5 for men and 21.1 for women. By 2025, those ages had risen to 30.8 for men and 28.4 for women. Married-couple households have also declined—from 66 percent of all U.S. households in 1975 to 47 percent in 2025.

Marriage has not disappeared as a desire. Among never-married adults ages 18–34, 69 percent still say they want to marry someday. Yet only 20 percent of adults in that age group say marriage is extremely or very important to living a fulfilling life. Marriage is increasingly viewed not as the foundation for building an adult life, but as an optional milestone that can be postponed.

At the same time, **cohabitation—an unmarried couple living together—has moved from rare to common**. Census data show that in 1968 only about 0.1 percent of adults ages 18–24 and 0.2 percent of those ages 25–34 were living with an unmarried partner. By 2018, those numbers had risen to 9 percent and 15 percent. Pew Research also found that among adults ages 18–29, 44 percent had cohabited while only 23 percent had ever married. Even more striking, **78 percent of adults under 30 considered cohabitation acceptable** even when the couple had no plans to marry.

Those numbers tell us something important: **our culture's understanding of marriage has changed. But changing attitudes do not change God's design.**

From the beginning, God established marriage as the proper covenant relationship for a man and woman to form a home together. **Genesis 2:24** says, ***“Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh.”*** Marriage was not invented by society, government, or tradition. It began with God.

Jesus reaffirmed that design. In **Matthew 19:4–6**, He pointed back to creation and said that God made them male and female, and that a man should leave his parents and be joined to his wife. Jesus then concluded, ***“What therefore God has joined together, don't let man tear apart.”*** Marriage is more than a social arrangement. It is a union in which God Himself is involved.

The New Testament also speaks plainly about the honor that belongs to marriage. **Hebrews 13:4** says, ***“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled.”*** God does not treat marriage as outdated, unnecessary, or optional when a couple desires the privileges of married life. He calls marriage honorable.

Paul likewise wrote, ***“Because of sexual immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband”*** (1 Corinthians 7:2). God’s pattern places sexual intimacy within marriage, not before it and not as a substitute for it.

Cohabitation may be increasingly accepted by society, but Christians are not called to measure right and wrong by what is common. **Romans 12:2** reminds us, ***“Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”***

The church therefore has an important responsibility. We must teach our children, grandchildren, and young adults that **marriage is not merely a piece of paper or an old custom. It is God’s good design for companionship, faithfulness, intimacy, family, and the building of a home.**

Culture may change. God’s wisdom does not.