

# **Cohabitation**

By Jack Greenoe

## **Pre-Session Assignments**

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### **Assignment One**

Read the comments related to 1 Thessalonians 4:3 in the section **It's in the Book**. Study the comments on God's warning His people about sex outside of marriage. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Does God see marital "test drives" as sinful? Is "abstaining" the same thing as "occasional"?

### **Assignment Two**

Read the comments related to Galatians 5:19–21 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Why did God place sexual sin first in this list of behaviors and attitudes consistent with "the flesh"?

### **Assignment Three**

Read the comments related to Galatians 5:22–23 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Why did God emphasize the ways a life controlled by the Holy Spirit acts? Would your life be characterized by the list in Galatians 5:19–21, the list in Galatians 5:22–23, or neither?

### **Scripture to Memorize**

*For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life - is not from the Father but is from the world. 1 John 2:16*

### **Session Goal**

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand not only that God views marriage as a reflection of His faithfulness to His covenant with His people but also that God's perfect will involves His people not entering into a sexual relationship outside of marriage—either before or after the wedding.

**Jack L. Greenoe** is an adjunct instructor at Southwestern Seminary, where he earned a PhD in Christian ethics and a master of divinity with Biblical languages. He is a member of the seminary's President's Club and Board of Visitors. He has served on staff at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, is the Co-CEO of Claes and Greenoe Marketing Group in Addison, Texas, and serves on the committee to update the translation of a modern version of the Bible. He and Gail, his wife of 35 years, reside in Plano, Texas. He can be reached on Facebook and on Twitter at @jackgreenoe.

## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

The following is a true story: A young woman expressed to me that she was having difficulty making ends meet. She was considering moving in with an older, male coworker. She tried to assure me that the relationship would not include sexual privileges. I told her this was a bad plan because the arrangement would give the appearance of evil, even if a sexual relationship never developed. In addition, people may underestimate the power of temptation over time.

Cohabitation is not an option for disciples. God creates lifetime marriages, founded on a lifelong covenant with God and a loving and permanent commitment with each other.

### Abstain from Sexual Immorality

**Read** 1 Thessalonians 4:3 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 3. abstain from sexual immorality.** God is not saying to abstain from sex. If that were so, there would be no human population on earth. Adam and Eve enjoyed a sexual relationship that was designed not only for reproduction but also for pleasure within the loving and protective boundaries of marriage. The Song of Solomon is replete with vivid descriptions of a man and his wife enjoying each other sexually.

God created sex and He gives it as one of His best gifts to those who are married. At the same time, all sexual relationships outside of marriage are wrong. The Bible employs different words to describe adultery (extramarital sex), fornication (premarital sex), and homosexuality. The Bible classifies each of these as sin. **immorality.** The Bible also uses a collective word to describe these sins, and it is most frequently translated as "immorality." This Greek word is the source of the English word *pornography*. **sanctification.** Disciples should be primarily concerned with growing in Christlikeness (sanctification), and sexual immorality hinders that growth tremendously.

Cohabitation does not necessarily include sexual relationships, but such relationships are almost guaranteed due to temptation. Disciples who embrace spiritual growth turn *away* from any temptation toward sexual immorality. At the same time, disciples turn *toward* a one-flesh relationship (see Genesis 2:24), becoming one physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: Does God see marital "test drives" as sinful? Is "abstaining" the same thing as "occasional"?

### Discussion Questions

How can a premarital sexual relationship stunt spiritual growth?

### On Your Own

Using a printed or online concordance, find several Bible verses that use the word *immorality*. In the space below, write insights you gain from other verses.

## Deeds of the Flesh and Fruit of the Spirit

Read Galatians 5:19–23 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verses 19. impurity.** In addition to “immorality,” discussed above, Paul uses a word which literally means “uncleanness.” Don’t see this as someone who has just played football in the rain. This refers more to mental and spiritual uncleanness. See this as describing someone whose mind is set on things God considers unclean. **sensuality.** This English word does not adequately address Paul’s point. The term refers to someone whose mind is so set on sexually immoral issues that he or she has lost all sense of shame. In other words, the person doesn’t care who sees or knows what he or she is doing. The person has gone past experimenting with immorality to being “all in.” The apostle Peter uses this same word to describe the impact of sensuality on Christian witness. He writes in 2 Peter 2:2, “And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be blasphemed.” When someone who claims to follow Christ enters into this level of sensuality, that person brings great harm to the testimony of Jesus. As with any sin, this requires complete repentance.

### Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: Why did God place sexual sin as the first in this list of behaviors and attitudes consistent with “the flesh”?

### Discussion Questions

What is the significance of Paul’s placing sexual sin at the front of his list?

### On Your Own

In the power of the Holy Spirit and for the glory of God, consider making a promise to Jesus that you will live in sexual purity from today until you go to glory. As part of that commitment, promise that you will experience sex only in a biblical marriage relationship and that you will not cohabit with someone you are not married to. If this expresses the desire of your heart, write your promise in the space below.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 22. love.** The Greek word translated “love” here describes the unconditional love God mercifully shows to all sinners who come to Him in repentance. **joy.** The Greek word for “joy” comes from the same root as the English words *grace* and *gift*. Disciples should understand that joy comes from obedience to God’s plan for our lives. It is different from happiness, which depends on circumstances. **goodness.** The word for “goodness” refers to moral excellence. The term carries with it the idea of doing the right things. No one can always do the right things in human strength. Only the Spirit can help disciples do the right thing consistently.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: Why did God emphasize the ways a life controlled by the Holy Spirit acts? Would your life be characterized by the list in Galatians 5:19–21, the list in Galatians 5:22–23, or neither?

### **On Your Own**

Sexual sin, like any other sin, can be forgiven by God with true repentance. If you have already given in to sexual temptation, ask God to forgive you and ask your partner's forgiveness, as well.

### **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

### **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

### **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

### **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

### **Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## **At Home: Nail It Down**

Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for sin. God loved the world so much that He gave His Son for that very purpose. When God forgives, He chooses to forget. That is a freeing, refreshing thought for His children.

Even though God forgives completely, the consequences of sin often remain. That is especially true of sexual sin. Almost like a Trojan horse, cohabitation and all sex outside of marriage carry hidden harm. God forgets, but those who fall sexually may struggle with memories and other trauma for years.

Movies and television make premarital house sharing seem almost ideal. Increasingly, the culture views moving in together as a nonissue morally and as an arrangement that usually leads to happiness.

In reality, cohabitation is similar to cotton candy. It appears sweet from a distance, but when you try to grasp it, all you get is air. Cohabitation is a satanic deception designed to imitate godly marriage. Disciples must not allow the enemy to tempt them to settle for a cheap and deadly imitation of the real thing.

God's plan for marriage is rock solid, not a handful of sticky air. Only in a lifetime commitment can a couple discover true spiritual, emotional, mental and physical unity. Both sex and marriage are beautiful gifts from God, and only in a biblical marriage can a couple symbolize Christ's love for and commitment to the church.

### **Follow up Question**

*Why would you choose not to move in with a romantic partner before marriage?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.