

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
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Fearless – Episode 88 – Why Have We Accepted Cohabitation As The New Normal?

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:00 Cohabitation, it dishonors God. So why is shacking up okay with so many Christians? That's what I'm gonna take a look at in today's episode of *Fearless*, in my series, "The Elephant in the Room."

Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:33 It is really hard to believe that the holidays are here. Um, it just feels like we started this new season of *Fearless*, but here we are Thanksgiving and Christmas or right around the corner. And you might be preparing for people to come visit whether that is family, adult, children coming back, um, or just friends who come to stay with you for the holidays. And in recent years, I noticed just kind of this trend where more and more families are allowing their grown children to come back into their home and stay in the same room with their fiance or with their girlfriend. And I've been kind of shocked by this trend I've seen cuz I can't imagine if I'd come home as an adult with my boyfriend Corey and said, "Hey dad, we're gonna stay in the same room." That just would not have gone over too well. Um, I probably won't even repeat what my dad might have said or would've done to Corey, but I've seen this as a growing trend. And we're gonna talk about that today here on *Fearless*, about cohabitation and couples that are choosing to live together. And once again, I always wanna remind myself when I'm talking about these issues, these tough issues, I'm talking to Christians, that is my audience here. The world wouldn't understand the world doesn't live by our standards that God set. So I wanna remind that we're, I'm talking to Christians here. Um, but Corey and I found ourselves in the same situation. Um, when some of our dearest friends who were not married, but did live together and they came to stay with us and we were asking ourselves kind of before they came, well, what do we do?

Will we allow them to stay in the same room? Do we need to put them in separate rooms? Um, I felt like we were parents and we were just these like young adults. And do we just love them because we don't wanna offend them. We wanna keep that relationship strong so we can always speak truth into him, which that's kind of what Satan tells us all the time is we've talked here own *Fearless* before. So we ask these questions and maybe many of you listening have asked these same questions of what do you do when people come to visit that aren't married, but wanna stay in the same room. And Cory and I came to the conclusion because it is easier not to say anything. It's easier to completely ignore the situation and not to confront the ones you love, especially at holidays. Holidays are already intense and awkward, especially if you're gonna talk politics or any other awkward things.

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Um, so why add to it? And Corey and I decided at that moment that God had honored us with this beautiful home. We were kind of young newlyweds ourselves and that we were to honor him with it and that we couldn't compromise that standard just to make somebody feel comfortable. And so we, we did, we made this grown couple sleep in separate rooms now who knows what they did once we went to bed. But um, that relationship, guess what? Wasn't ruined. It didn't mess up our relationship. They respected it, they honored it. And um, it was a decision that many of you all might have to be making. But as I was studying in for this episode it also reminded me of a time. This was like years ago, I was having a conversation with a friend. And once again, this wasn't a Christian friend. Um, but he had been living with his girlfriend for years and years and years. And I was just curious of his answer of why don't you get married? And he just said, well, I don't wanna do what the world tells me I have to do. And I kind of reversed it back onto him. And I said, well, you're actually doing exactly what the world tells you to do. Cuz the world tells us it's okay to live with one another. It's like having a marriage is now kind of like the unpopular thing to do. But I was just curious that that was his answer, that he didn't wanna do what the world told him to do.

And I realized over the years we've normalized cohabitation and that's kind of a big word. That's not a word I use quite often. My mom would've said shack up, living together back in her day. But um, it's now accepted in all these realms and it really started noticing it in kind of Hollywood. Of course that's where it seems to happen a lot. These trends where the magazines, these couples aren't married, but they're having a baby and they're celebrating. And then you see 'em having their second or third baby and they're still not getting married, but now the church has seemed to accept it. And of course, culture has infiltrated inside the church and we see these Christian celebrities who claim to be Bible believing Christians, but then they're living with their fiancé or girlfriend, or boyfriend. Um, one of them is Chris Pratt from Hollywood.

He's a Hollywood A-lister. Uh, he was divorced from his first wife and began living with his girlfriend. And he's a strong advocate with conservative Christian values. And then I think of Patrick Mahomes, the Kansas city quarterback, who once again was this, um, open Christian, but he was living with his girlfriend. He's now married, but living with his girlfriend fiancé, then they had a baby, then they got married. And it seems like as the church or Christians, we accept it without any suggestion of a contradiction between their claims to be being Bible, believing Christians and the way they choose to live their life and to cohabit with their significant other. We would just accept it. Cause we're so excited to see a, a Christian that says that they love God, but they don't live a life for it. Um, and you've probably heard that politics full, um, flows downstream from culture. But now it seems as, so does the church where downstream of what culture sets. And here's the problem. And at first, I thought this was just kind of maybe a trend I noticed, um, and wasn't paying too much attention to. And when I started kind of researching, preparing for this episode, the statistics are quite alarming, especially when it comes to the church. But when a growing segment of culture doesn't have a biblical worldview or

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is biblically illiterate, which we've addressed here on *Fearless* many times, just the values, the behaviors and all the normal stuff of conduct has morphed into a cultural worldview where anything goes, anything gonna goes in the church as well, but biblical ideas have consequences, but so do unbiblical ideas and a recent study from Arizona Christian university. And it was entitled an American Worldview Inventory found that only 37% of pastors have a biblical worldview. This study noted that one third of senior pastors believe that there's no absolute truth. And each individual gets to determine exactly what is morally true or not. And that just speaks to this whole entire series, which is quite alarming study. Um, and since those ideas have consequences, one consequence of not believing the Bible as truth is we now have more than one third of senior pastors say is morally acceptable for two unmarried people to have sexual relations. And I'm just gonna repeat that is that we now have one third of senior pastors say it is morally acceptable for two unmarried people to have sexual relations. Um, and you think like for these pastors, this, um, like culture's new sexual ethic is more appealing than God's clear design for marriage and how a marriage is to honor him. And I learned a new word. <laugh> a colleague taught me a new word. It's a big word. Um, but I thought I would share it with you and it's called syncretism. And let's hope I'm saying that correctly. I did, you know, Google it and let it say it and repeat it. But syncretism, and if you Google, it's gonna give you some of these crazy, like long, long definitions, but in its simplest forms, think of blending, cultural beliefs with the traditions, with religious beliefs. You mix God's word and cultural traditions and you have syncretism. And this has happened to our churches. We see that where we're blending kind of the culture we're blending the church kind of picking and choosing what those beliefs are. And they've morphed into this. And Arizona Christian University study says that syncretism is the most common worldview among pastors. <laugh> like that, that one might just hurt a little bit if you think about that, that that's the most common world view amongst pastors. And Dr. George Barna, the, um, director of the study said, "With so many churches and their pastors in the cultural's grip, rather than fervently committed to serving God and teaching his Word, you can clearly see why most churchgoing Christians are being more influenced by the culture than the culture is being influenced by Christians." And when the Barna study says that one third of pastors don't spend time in the Bible during a typical week, if these are the pastors that are to be leading the congregation, um, this just kind of states the whole problem of this whole Elephant in the Room series that we're facing.

So we have to begin, um, and God's word daily, or this trendy kind of cultural messaging takes over and begins to push scripture out. Um, but one disturbing cultural trend where God's word is being tossed out over and over once again, I thought it was just me noticing it, but is this cohabitation. And it is just like growing rapidly. When I think about like 25 or 30 years ago, even like my non, like my family's like non-Christian friends or even how, like my mom grew up, my mom didn't grow up like in a really Christian home, you never, would've dreamed of living together in our culture. Um, even if you were sleeping with your significant other and having sex, you're not gonna live

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with them because, um, in my mom's words, that is so tacky who would do that <laugh>. So it is just now acceptable and even in our church, but in my opinion, this is just going unchallenged in the church. I don't hear churches talking about it. We're gonna get for that to why the reasons that the church is not talking about it, but with the rapid moral decay of this nation, that we continue to see this shouldn't be shocking to us. Um, But yet the church we're called to be separate of the world. We're called to be different and to set our lives apart. And just like many of these topics we're facing and that we're discussing here on *Fearless* is that we're not setting our lives apart. But I wanna make sure that I'm clear is cohabitation is the symptom here. Um, choosing sex outside of marriage is the sin. And that could be a whole 'nother episode here on *Fearless*. But once again, I think that's a subject that the church has kind of failed to talk about. And even Christian parents. I think there was kind of like a generation where Christian parents didn't wanna talk about, um, sex, and then we just found a gen just ignored it. So I think it's so important for us to have that conversation with our children young. My mom, whew, every time we were in the car, like she didn't give up opportunities. She had those tough conversations with us and sometimes they were so awkward. You wanted to die, but I'm so thankful she did. And she was open and she was raw about it. But, I saw some families that just ignored the subject all in general and just kind of gave up on it. I know one of my friends and, um, a Christian once again, kind of probably identifies as Christian. You know, we just saw that, um, new research come out by Pew Research by 20, 70, only 35% will identify as Christians in this nation if the trends continue. But that word identify, I think is kind of tricky. Cuz what does that mean to identify a lot of people believe in a God or believe in God, many people would believe in Jesus, but do they live their life? Serving him, striving for a holy life, living by his standards that he has set.

So I think that can always be tricky. But anyways, this friend, she just said, "I don't believe in teaching my kids abstinence, cuz I just don't even think it's possible that um, just teach 'em how to have protective sex." I'm like, "What?" This is even in a Christian school and in my mind, I'm just like, remind me not to let my kids hang out with your kids when they get to be teenagers because we just gave up on it. And it is like we've surrendered this issue that, oh, it's not possible. It's God's standards. It's too high of a standard. It's not possible. And we've given up on it. Um, so kind of went off on a rabbit trail, but choosing sex outside marriage is kind of the root of this sin. Um, so once again I found some concerning studies that um, half of all U.S. Christians now disagree with the basic precept that sex outside of marriage is a sin. Half of all Christians say sex outside of marriage is not a sin. 69% of all Americans say that it's acceptable to live together, even if the couple does not plan to get married. So if 69% of all Americans say it's acceptable to live together and we live in a nation right now that 65% identify as Christians. Um, once again, identify as a loose term that we'll use, but they identify as Christians right now. What does that say? Like who's promoting it if 65% of Christians and 69% believe it's okay. Um, that who's kind of their attitude that just shows the church's attitude towards cohabitation and the logic surrounding the argument for

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cohabitation, it doesn't hold up. Um, you know, it would seem like some people make sense of it kind of giving the relationship a test run. Um, if you will to see if the two are compatible by living together and that would ensure more of a successful marriage in the future. If they give it a test run, they're gonna have a greater success in their marriage and not end in divorce. Um, which I remember when I first moved to Fort Myers, kind of my group of friends and these older ladies were, they weren't Christians, but they loved me. I had a great time. They became some of my best friends and we were having this conversation about living together. And um, they could not believe that when Corey and I got married that we were virgins. I mean, I think she almost spit her bagel out of her mouth. So she couldn't believe it. And she goes, what if it wasn't? Um, what if you weren't compatible? What if you know, you wouldn't buy a car without giving it a test run, which I'll get into that. I always think that's a funny analogy. And they were just laughing. They thought it was amazing that I would wait till marriage. It was just such a foreign concept to them, but now it's becoming a foreign concept inside the church. And that is so alarming. Um, because people think that that's gonna give them a greater success in marriage. And now years later, even though that's been an argument for 20 to 30 years or the last 20 years, we have these studies that don't line up with that, um, that divorce rates are historically are higher amongst those who are lived together beforehand. And um, additionally, marital quality and satisfaction are lower amongst those who cohabitated before they got married. But why do we fall into this trap? Like what are some of the reasons that we are hearing inside the church? Once again, cause I'm talking to the church here. Um, one is that I've heard over and over are these young couples who buy a house together and that it closes before the wedding date. So it might just close like four to six weeks, you know, before their wedding. So they're gonna live together before they get married, but they're gonna sleep in separate rooms, supposedly, they say, and I don't buy that for a second. Come on. We all know how powerful Satan is, how powerful attraction is. Especially before a marriage and before a wedding, you can't tell me that y'all are sleeping in separate bedrooms, but despite all that, why would that be okay to still live in the same home? Cuz what does that tell the world? What does that tell your Christian or your non-Christian friends? What do they think you're doing? How do they perceive it and what does it look like? Um, we are to be set apart from the world. Um, once again, it's the test run like you wouldn't buy a car without giving it a test run. Well, I'm not a car. Those cars don't have feelings. They don't have emotions at the end of it. If you decide not to buy it and you return it to the lot, um, that car's feelings are not gonna be hurt. Where you look at women, especially women, they say statistically women go in to living together with the hopes of marriage where men don't quite have that expectation. It's just kind of a next step they do. And it's the women that are mostly heartbroken. And now we're finding studies that are just crazy. The things that they have to divide up even legally and they're not even married. So it gets messy and wild. But um, I always think the car analogy is really funny.

Another one I've heard is like, just save on rent. Life is super expensive right now. Um, and to find a, a roommate, if you move into like a new city and you gotta find a stranger

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maybe through the church or through some website and it's just a mess to find a roommate, um, that sometimes it can just be easier to live with your boyfriend or your girlfriend, your significant other. Um, but I think this is funny. It's not just the younger generation that is doing this. We see this, um, with people who are getting older, who might, um, maybe their spouse died and they are choosing to live together, rather than not getting married in it in order to draw financial benefits from their previous marriages. Like if it's social security. So <laugh>, this is true, these are stories we're seeing inside the church. And I shouldn't be laughing, but these are grown people and they would rather lower God's standards, sin against a holy God so they can draw a financial benefit, um, from their dead spouse. It's um, you can't make this stuff up once again, pastors are having to deal with all kinds of wild scenarios that we couldn't imagine. But sex is so powerful. I mean, God created it to be powerful and to be amazing. And our enemy knows it. Satan knows that, um, he knows that it's this incredible gift God's given us and he easily uses it to leverage us against God. I think it's one of his most powerful tools. Um, Satan tries to get you to have sex before marriage. And then once you're married, he tries to separate the two. It's like you see him in his schemes and his plans.

But going against God's design for marriage and sex, it's never gonna be a good idea. Is this like protective umbrella that God gives us of love and mercy to protect us from the heartache, to protect us, um, from past that would be so destructive to our lives. He gives us reasons for this. It's not. So we can't have any fun. Once again, I say this in almost every episode, it's like me as a parent, I give my rules to my kids cuz I know what will protect them. God does this so it won't lead us to down a life of heartache and destruction. But um, Isaiah 55 says, "His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He knows the best. He is our heavenly father who gives us these things to protect us." And um, we now even, you know, have these Christian studies and we have these secular studies that all are pointing to the same thing that God's design works best. Al Moler highlights an article from the New York times in which the author of the article talks about her own experience, um, in cohabitation and the article points out that couples are now drawing up what are called no-nups. Yes, no-nup, not a pre-nup, a no-nup, which are no nuptial agreements to outline financial and legal obligations. And there are all these complexities of being married without the legal protections and the recognition of marriage. A Penn State university professor who did a secular study, um, said that people are much fussier about whom they marry than whom they cohabit with. So we make these decisions just kind of very loosely. We're not, we're not going into it with a lifelong commitment and a full commitment. And that kind of goes into the heartache of it all. Somebody's gonna get hurt at the end of it. I have never met, um, I should say I've never seen some of my friends not end in heartache when they end up separating at the end of all of it. I didn't watch the full series of The Chosen, but I do remember the scene of the woman at the well and Jesus. And of that was just a powerful scene to kind of imagine. And I think of John four and it says, "The woman answered and said to Him, 'I have no husband.'" Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, I have no husband for you have had five

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husbands. And the one whom you now have is not your husband, this which you have said is true.” And I just think of Jesus as like redemptive spirit, his love in that moment. Um, because we have to remember God and his mercy gives us the guidance and standards to live by that Jesus and his love, it is redemptive. So, maybe you're living with a significant other, maybe you have a loved one that's in this situation. It's just to remember that it's never too late to choose to do what is right to decide that you're gonna walk on a path that is holy before God and that honors him. So I just wanna say that encouraging that God's love is redemptive. It's never too late to make the right decision. But, um, when we don't walk in those ways, when we make some of these decisions, those decisions have serious consequences. And it reminds me of the story of King David in Second Samuel. And it's when they're bringing the Ark of the Covenant back into Jerusalem. And there was just like a huge celebration and joy. And remember that God gave like strict rules of how the ark should be carried. It couldn't be touched. And it was at that moment, the ark began to tip over and people out of love, like trying to do what was right, and just try to be helpful grabbed. And they touched it trying to make it not fall down. And they were struck dead right there in that moment. And in our minds, we think we try to reason, like why would a loving God strike them down? They were trying to do what was right. And it's cuz God has standards and those standards have serious consequences. And um, when we mess with his design on sex and his design for marriage and stuff, it has consequences that can be hurtful, that can be destructive, that can be deadly to us. So like we do in all of these series of *Fearless*, why is the church not talking about this? Why are pastors not talking about it? Why has the church accepted this as kind of the normal? And that is because it is normal. When, um, when I had read those statistics that now evangelicals call this the new norm, according to David A. Ains, um, where one third of pastors believe that living together is acceptable. So it is normal. Now it's accepted. We have surrendered that that is a, um, maybe something that is not realistic in our culture. We're allowing culture to define how we live.

Another reason that pastors aren't talking about it is just fear. Um, it can be the fear of offending those. I think of John, the Baptist, who was beheaded because he addressed the sexual sin of King Herod and ended up getting him beheaded. And we live in a nation right now where we don't wanna offend people, but even John Baptist called out the sexual sin, um, of his leader and we sit silent, the church sits silent and we don't even call it out in our congregation. Um, because we don't wanna offend. Why? Because a lot of them in the con congregation are living together. They would have to come face to face with the sexual sin that they're living in. And as I've said this before here on *Fearless*, unfortunately it's become a business, the church has. These pastors have to keep their lights on. They gotta, um, pay their staff, their staff and their families, their livelihoods on their shoulders. You offend some of these couples that might be living together. That might be big donors. And that takes a big hit. So they live almost of the fear of those finances, those, um, the fear of offending those in their congregation instead of speaking truth. And once again, whether it's a pastor and a church, or

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whether it's one on one with your friend, we can't be afraid of offending and speaking truth and always do it of course, with grace and truth, as I encourage you here and *Fearless*, there are ways to do it. Um, but I know pastors that have faced anger and blow back when they've confronted couples, including even their staff members, you know, because yeah, when you confront my sin, when you tell me I've done something wrong, it's uncomfortable at first. Um, and so pastors are just, they face the anger. But I do think pastors are trying to connect with a younger generation. This shows you, it's kind of a trend that churches fail. We become biblically illiterate that way. The pastors now don't even know what we believe as some of the words that we have learned here in syncretism. They have this different worldview now, not a biblical worldview. And then now that's down to the younger generation and now they're trying to connect to a younger generation that doesn't believe sex outside marriage is sin. So it goes all full circle of these pastors who have, um, not committed themselves to teach God's word. Even in those uncomfortable moments to teach the cross, to teach what Jesus Christ did on the cross, to teach God's ways are holy, they're to be protective of us because he loves us and he wants to keep us, um, from a destructive path. And I just want, um, to encourage you at the end of this, once again, this is a tough subject we're talking about here. It might hit very personal to some of you who are listening, um, whether it's with your child or whether it's with you personally, or somebody, you know. So, what can we do as a church? What can we do as Christians, um, with those in our own circle. Um, first off we have to remember, we are to be set apart from the world. That has to be kind of our baseline here. It's like that question, Corey and I asked, "What are we gonna do when this couple comes to our home?" Our home is to honor the Lord and, um, Satan plants those little seeds in our heart like, oh, you're gonna offend them. You won't love them. You'll tear the relationship apart, but we have standards and those are not our standards. Definitely not the world standards, but those are God standards. And that's who we answer to. So you gotta set kind of that baseline to set yourself apart because, um, in Romans 12, it says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you'll be able to test and approve what is God's will his good pleasing and perfect will." And when you allow that to be your baseline, God gives you the wisdom through the Holy Spirit, to direct yourselves in these situations.

Like, let's talk for parents. Kids are coming home from the holidays. Do you allow your grown children to stay under your house in the same room that might be with their significant other first off you can't control what your grown children are doing on their own. If they live in a different city and they have their own apartment, you can't control that once they're out of your house, but you can control what happens inside your own house. And so I just wanna encourage that. You can, um, do that kindly and gently, but you don't apologize for it. Those are your standards. We just had a, a really good friend of ours. Um, and she's older. She's even got grown children, but she's getting ready to get, uh, remarried. And she came to stay with her parents. And I asked her dad, I said, "Are you gonna let them stay in the same room?" And he goes, "What are you crazy?"

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This is one of like my dad's best friends. I said, um, he's like an uncle. I said, that's the new trend? Um, that's what parents are allowing their kids. He goes, "Never." And, of course, this daughter would never even imagine asking that she wouldn't do that to her dad, but we were just laughing that that's kind of the new norm, but you can control what happens in your home and you should control what happens in your home. Um, I remember one time, my daughter, we walked in to somebody's home. And the couple that she knew were in the bathroom, taking a shower together and then sharing a room. And at five she ask goes, why are they staying in the same room? She was shocked, at five years old she knew the difference. And I had to have that tough conversation. And that just shows you kind of like the sins of others affects children. And we had a great conversation about it.

I do think we need to be discerning when it comes to choosing a church these days, we have to be very careful, um, to make sure we are going to a church that teaches God's Word as authoritative Word of God, that the Bible is, um, that it's truth and that we should stand on it. Um, and we need to make clear that we stand against culture, that we're counter the culture, that we don't conform to the world. And don't be ashamed of that. I wanna encourage you. Don't apologize for that stand boldly for it. Um, and stand proudly for that. And just lastly, you know, I believe that we've become desensitized to the topic we've become so used to seeing people in our circle where we work, or even now in the church who are living together, that it has become the normal and we just accept it as okay. And we ignore it. And I just wanna encourage you that we should always be standing for truth, standing for biblical truth, that God will give you a way to do it with grace. And with love that standard is to never change. God does not change with culture. And once again, you cannot help what people do outside of your home, but you can help what happens inside your home. So as the holidays are approaching and you find yourself in a situation like Corey and I did many years ago, is that don't listen to the lies of Satan, where he'll say you're gonna offend somebody. You'll ruin that relationship. You know what? It might, it might hurt that relationship. They might be mad at you, but who are you more worried about offending friends or family or God. And that's the question you have to ask yourself. And I wanna encourage you at all of this is kind of like here on *Fearless*, as I say, often it comes down for our children. We're to set that example so our kids see that standard. Our kids need that clarity in this time of confusion. This world is just full of chaos. And we, as parents can set that standard and it takes courage, takes courage to stand and have those conversations with our family members and with those people around us. But courage is contagious. And I promise you, although it might be difficult in the moment and you might have some blow back at times, but you honor God and He will honor you.

MUSIC TRANSITION

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00:30:42 Thank you for joining me here on *Fearless*. As always, I encourage you to follow me on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Also, if you've missed any old episodes and would like to get caught up, you can check them out on CissieGrahamLynch.com.

CLOSING MUSIC

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