

Living Together: A Trial Run?

by Sebastian R Fama

Test driving a car before buying it is a good way to be sure you are getting the vehicle you want and need. Knowing how it handles and experiencing its creature comforts can aid greatly in helping you make an informed decision. The whole idea is to know what you are getting into before you make a commitment. It is not uncommon for some people to approach marriage in the same way. But people are not cars. People are human beings. And human beings are governed by their biology. And human biology does not support the “trial run” method. Mary Beth Bonacci explains why:

Hormonally, sexual arousal and intercourse set off a chain reaction designed to keep married couples bound together. Women experience a flood of oxytocin – the same hormone which they produce in labor and in nursing a baby. Oxytocin causes a woman to be forgetful, decreases her ability to think rationally – and causes an incredibly strong emotional attachment to form with the man she is with (*The Benefits of Chastity*).

The same oxytocin that causes a woman to bond with her baby, causes her to bond with the man she sleeps with. That means, her ability to discern and make wise decisions has been considerably diminished. And that increases the chances for heartache and divorce. Bottom line, you may choose to ignore your biology. But your biology will not ignore you.

Linda Waite is a professor of sociology at the University of Chicago. She has done several studies on cohabitation and marriage. She says: “People who cohabit are more likely to get a divorce. We know that is true in every society where it has been studied — Sweden, Canada, and the United States” (*Modern Myths About Cohabitation, National Catholic Register*).

Michael J. Rosenfeld and Katharina Roesler of Stanford University did their own study and found that:

In the first year of marriage, couples who cohabited before marriage have a lower marital dissolution rate than couples who did not cohabit before marriage. ... After the first year of marriage, the couples who had not cohabited before marriage have caught up in the practical experience of living with their partner, and after that point, the hazard of marital dissolution is substantially higher for couples who cohabited before marriage (*Cohabitation Experience and Cohabitation's Association with Marital Dissolution*).

It has been said that one should approach marriage with eyes wide open. But once married, you should keep them half closed. And that is exactly what our biology enables us to do.