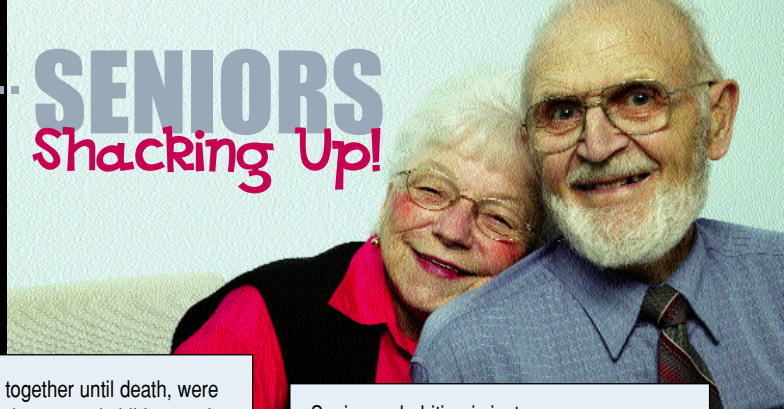


WHAT OUR READERS SAY ABOUT...

The November/December 2006 Plain Truth article, "Seniors Shacking Up," by Ron Benson, addressed the issue of older Christians who live together without getting married—often to avoid pension, Social Security, health insurance or inheritance problems. The article brought plenty of response from our readers—which was to be expected, as we had asked readers to respond. We share a sampling of letters here. We have edited these to fit our limited space, but we have not lost the varied and strong opinions on this controversial subject!—the editors



SENIORS Shacking Up!

Are cohabitants sinning? Yes and no. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). God knows the motives of the individuals living together. If we are all judged individually, then conviction lies with the individual. If a person with impure motives is convicted that he or she is living in sin, then yes, he or she is sinning. If a person with pure motives is convicted he or she has God's blessing, then that person is not sinning. It's simply a matter of conviction. —Mary, Indiana

If a couple lived together until death, were faithful to each other, reared children and upon death left their property to the surviving spouse—just because there were racist laws forbidding marriage between blacks and whites, were these couples not married? In western society, for much of our history, families arranged marriages without the church or state poking their noses in. Perhaps it is time for us to consider shoving their noses back out, where necessary. —Iris, California

Seniors cohabiting is just as wrong as young people living together. If they're just living together for company and not engaging in sex then I would say go for it, but if they are sexually involved, that is called fornication. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says that fornicators will not inherit heaven. Seniors should suffer hardship rather than disobey God. We should work together to change laws that penalize older people for doing the right thing. Shame on America, which claims to be a Christian nation, yet penalizes people for doing what's right according to the Bible. —Virginia, California

Reforms should be sought ensuring minimal housing and medical needs for all seniors. But no matter our age, we should take responsibility for our needs and serve others to the best of our abilities. We are each accountable for our actions and motivations. Should able-bodied adults be concerned about inheriting from a parent? Shouldn't we sacrifice (time and money) to help prevent loneliness for a senior parent? However, if a senior has enough money to leave an inheritance, shouldn't it be secured before marrying again? Are financial concerns really needs or wants? Greed and responsibility cut both ways. —Adela, Oregon

I was delighted to read your comments that marriage is a "God-thing" rather than a "state-thing." My pastor-husband and I have been legally married for more than fifty years—a marriage we consider a God-thing. But we didn't understand that concept until much later. I suppose it is necessary in society to have legal documentation of a couple's union, but it should not be the job of government to say whether that union is legal or not. The only legal requirement I consider necessary is that both individuals be of legal age. Two adults in a committed relationship should not be penalized by the government. —Dolores, Nebraska

One of America's myths is that a person loses Social Security by remarrying. There may be some complications with older couples and marriage. But you should have done more homework. Although pensions from other sources may be changed or even eliminated, Social Security does not change survivor's benefits for widows and widowers. Check at www.ssa.gov. If circumstances are different, for instance a marriage ended by divorce and not death, then S.S.A. benefits may change, depending on age. Without printing a caveat, *Plain Truth* has perpetuated the Social Security myth. —Garnet, Washington

• U.S. laws were changed in 1979 to remove the so-called remarriage penalty. But there are complications—as you mention. It is possible that divorce may have an effect on benefits. In addition, benefits from a deceased spouse will be lost upon remarriage before age 60. —the editors

I have some questions. Is being a Christian supposed to be easy? Are we to live without sacrifice? Is money more important than morality? What kind of message are we sending to our young people? Do we okay anything we want just because we are old? Did Christ take the easy way out? Where is love in self-centered actions? These are not legalistic questions. Are we not told that we should stay away from things that would even look wrong, so we will not send the wrong messages, causing others to stray? —LaVina, Kansas

The U.S. Government is at fault with its marriage penalty law. We've been fighting this for years. The only answer is to lobby Congress through AARP, and to get the law annulled. Simple wills can designate what goes to individual heirs. Meanwhile, how about the sin of judging others? —Shirley, Oregon

You explained why seniors shack up, but failed to give an appropriate Bible perspective on the issue. Seniors have unique problems, but so do younger and middle-aged people who are considering marriage. Instead of making excuses for seniors, let them come to grips with their self-centered way of life. I am positive most senior shack-ups would marry if the money issue could be eliminated. In many cases, seniors are living in sin, just as two young adults would be. Except that many seniors can't remember if they are married, divorced or just passing from one relationship to another! —Richard, California

The church could perform a godly marriage without the government's permission. "Caesar" has stolen more than his share from the poor people. My parents have two sets of friends who have lived together without paperwork for 30-plus years, yet to me they are married! There are other people who were legally wed by supposedly ordained ministers who turned out not to be ordained. Are those couples not married? God's grace will decide. —Toni, Kentucky

Adam and Eve were presumed married without a license, as were Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca and throughout the Bible. Until the 1600s, there were no marriage licenses, and a marriage license today is analogous to a driver or fishing license. If the state revokes your driver license, you shouldn't drive—but your marriage license? Would you be unmarried? I think not! A marriage license is simply a form that generates revenue. We do not say "What the state has joined together," nor "What the church has joined together," but "What God has joined together." —Ted, Indiana

