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Should Pastors Perform Marriages for Cohabiting Couples?

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Should Christian pastors preside at marriage ceremonies for cohabitating couples? That is not just a theoretical question — it is a pastoral dilemma faced by almost every pastor. Given the rising rates of cohabitation, this question will only grow more pressing.



In recent days, *Christianity Today* raised the question, and asked a panel of Christians to respond with brief answers to this question. I was among those asked, and here is my response:

“Pastors are stewards of a biblical understanding of sexuality. Marrying cohabiters miscommunicates the teaching function of marriage. I would only marry couples that were repentant, had forsaken the sin of cohabitating, and sought the remedy of marriage. Marriage does not simply validate the long-term commitment of a couple whose relationship has been based upon cohabitation. There’s another problem, which has to do with the fact that pastors are not the only stewards of marriage. In other words, marriage is accessible to persons outside the church. So when the church allows a marriage to take place within its life, it should be validating this in a way that goes beyond marriage as a creation institution and gets to what marriage is teaching in the ceremony of the church and the church’s stewardship of marriage.”

You will want to see the full range of responses, available [here](#).

Ruth Moon, compiler, "[Should Pastors Perform Marriages for Cohabiting Couples? Observers Weigh In](#)," *Christianity Today*, Thursday, September 29, 2011.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler

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