

Dear Michelle,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked for some scriptures regarding not stumbling your fellow brethren. You felt these scriptures would be valuable to an unmarried Christian couple that is sharing a place together, even though they are not physically sinning.

Below are some scriptures that address how eating food that was offered to idols, even though it was permissible, caused some of the early Christians to fall into sin.

“Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.” (1 Corinthians 8:13)

“Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:32)

“Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.” (Romans 14:13-16)

“Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.” (Romans 14:20-21)

In Matthew 15:12 we read: *Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"* It is interesting to note that the same Greek word is used for “offended” in this verse and for “stumble” or “cause him to fall” in 1 Corinthians 8:13. Both words, “stumble” and “offended”, come from *skandalizo*, which means, “to cause to be caught or to fall,” but it also means, “to give offense, to anger, shock” (scandalize).

Although the above scriptures deal mostly with food and drink, the same principle applies regarding any act that could be construed as sinful by an on-looker. “If anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.” (Romans 14:14) Even though there are no scriptural references that specifically forbid unmarried couples from living in the same abode, it certainly makes good moral sense to live apart. When a couple is living in the same house, even though they are not sexually intimate, they run a huge risk of falling into sin. Jesus tells us to pray that we be delivered from temptation (Matthew 6:13). This is difficult to do when living with temptation. Even if this couple is strong enough to live together and not be sexually intimate, their example sends a message to others who are not as strong that it is acceptable to live together.

The Apostle Paul is clear in his argument about eating idol-meat (1 Corinthians 10:31-33) that if we do something that we do not consider sinful, but in so doing cause other Christians to follow and cause them to stumble in sin, then we will be called into accountability.

Paul teaches throughout his writings that we are not our own—we no longer have our own “rights” but we are tied to Christ. All our actions should be measured by the glory they bring to God. This couple must ask themselves, “Are our actions glorifying God's laws? Are we good Christian examples to others of following in our Lord’s footsteps?” If this couple’s actions are perceived as sinful by others, they will be guilty of offending. If their actions lead some into sin, then they will be responsible for causing others to stumble. In either case, living together without the sacred bond of marriage is a prescription for, at best, misconception and, at worst, possible sin. Paul gives us good advice when he tells us to “set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

We hope we been of help to you. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio