

# HALEY TALKS TRUTH

We are pleased to announce 2026 Lincoln Day Speech Champion Haley Barkman is now a contributor to the monthly Defender Newsletter. Haley will write a series of short essays on Faith, Family and Freedom topics young people are discussing and contemplating.



## **Marriage minus Commitment equals Cohabitation**

By Haley Barkman

“You are not!” my friend shouted when I showed her my engagement ring. “I can’t believe you got engaged before me!”

She had a point. I had been dating Kaleb for a little over a year. She had been living with her boyfriend for three. Outside my Christian circle, (and sometimes inside it), people all reacted the same way. Even the woman doing my nails the day before my wedding told me to reconsider. She had lived with her boyfriend for ten years and still was not sure about marriage.

Many people view cohabitation as a natural step before engagement, while it is far better to marry the person you intend to spend your life with than to stall in something that

imitates commitment without requiring it. Most objections fall into three categories, which I will respond to one by one.

### **“Cohabitation is less expensive than marriage.”**

Sometimes. But it is also far more unstable. When a dating relationship ends, shared leases, furniture, and bills turn into immediate problems. I watched a couple in my building break up and scramble for housing within days. What looked cheaper became costly overnight.

### **“Marriage is a societal construct.”**

Even if that were true, look at the construct. Two people make a public promise to one another in front of witnesses. If that feels too binding, then do you really want to waste time living with that person?

### **“We’re not ready to get married.”**

Then living together makes even less sense. Sharing a home is not a trial version of commitment. It is a form of it, just without the clarity or accountability.

Cohabitation promises flexibility, keeping exits open. Marriage demands conviction and is meant to last. If your goal is lifelong love, only one of those paths requires you to act like you mean it. The other allows you to pretend you love your significant other, but gives you a convenient way out when things get hard.

