

Unit III: Christians and Sacrifice

How to Be Happy

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 139:13-24

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Romans 12:1-21; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

KEY VERSE

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19, KJV)

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Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. (1 Corinthians 6:19, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Identify Paul's guidance on the various ways in which believers glorify or dishonor God with their bodies.
- Appreciate a renewed commitment to preserving your bodies as worthy temples of God's Spirit.
- Offer examples of worshipping God that utilize each: mind, body, and spirit.

*Key Terms

Joined (verse 17)—Greek: *kollaō* (kol-lah'-o): glued together; fastened firmly together; cleaved (to); "united" (NIV).

Mastered (verse 12)—Greek: *exousiazó* (ex-oo-see-ad'-zo): exercised authority over; held under authority; "brought under the power of" (KJV).

Members (verse 15)—Greek: *melos* (mel'-os): limbs (of the body); bodily organs; parts.

One (verse 16)—Greek: *heis* (hice): agreement; common; single; unity.

Power (verse 14)—Greek: *dunamis* (doo'-nam-is): (miraculous) might, strength; force; ability.

Sin(s) (verse 18)—Greek: *hamartéma* (ham-ar'-tay-mah): fault(s); evil deed(s).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

The underlying purpose of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was to respond to a series of problems adversely affecting this congregation's spiritual growth, unity, and witness in Corinth. According to John MacArthur, the city of Corinth was noted as a center of moral corruption in the pagan world to the degree that in classical Greek, *corinthiazesthai* ("to be like a Corinthian") came to represent gross immorality and drunkenness, and the city's name synonymous to moral depravity (MacArthur, J. [1984]. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary—1 Corinthians*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers). Consequently, this congregation of Gentile Christians had difficulty getting the "Corinthian" out of them because some of them were guilty of practicing the city's sins before accepting Christ by faith. After receiving word from Christians who were members of "Chloe's household" and a letter from concerned members, Paul wrote this letter offering instructions regarding how this congregation could deal with their internal problems effectively and spiritually. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul addresses the issue of lawsuits among believers (verses 1-8) and returns to dealing with the issue of sexual immorality within the church (verses 9-20), which he began addressing in chapter 5. After listing behaviors that are incompatible with one inheriting God's kingdom, Paul reminds the Corinthians of their status, benefits, and identity in Christ, and, regarding sexual immorality, that their bodies are God's temple to be used to honor Him.

Introduction

During the 1960s and 1970s, a societal and cultural movement began that challenged traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships throughout the developed Western world known as "the sexual revolution." Underlying this movement were liberal attitudes toward sex and morality. Human sexuality became a widely discussed topic as a result of these changing social norms. Several factors influenced this movement, including advancements in contraception and the rise of feminists and civil rights movements. Currently, there is much debate around this topic, and it has a profound impact on the Christian church. For example, society's shift toward the liberation of sexual norms poses a direct challenge to traditional Christian teachings, forcing the church to respond to changing views about premarital sex, cohabitation, and abstinence. The result of these discussions has produced differing opinions and, in some cases, caused conflict within congregations and mainstream denominational groups.

On the other hand, some within the faith community have remained silent, refusing to discuss the topic or taking a "hands-off" stance. Still, others have responded by emphasizing sexual purity and abstinence until marriage and sexual ethics education to maintain traditional values and address issues like pornography and sexual abuse. Regardless of where Christians stand on this issue, biblical teaching, pastoral care, and counseling are critically essential to help congregations address and navigate contemporary sexual ethics

while upholding and remaining faithful to core Christian values. Fortunately, there is a biblical precedent and model to follow in addressing human sexuality among believers—the apostle Paul's instructions to Christians in Corinth who were experiencing a "sexual revolution" that involved sexual laxness and the misunderstanding that they were not to use their bodies to gratify the normal desires of the flesh unrestrictedly because they were God's temple.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Know the Body's Purpose (1 Corinthians 6:12-14)

KJV

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

NIV

12 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything.

13 You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

Paul returns to his instructions on sexual immorality among members of the church in Corinth after exposing the error of Christians' suing one another in civil courts (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-8) and emphasizing God's judgment on those who commit unrepentant sin—to include various forms of illicit sexual practices (see verses 9-10). Because of the misunderstanding of the principle of Christian freedom and their struggle to separate themselves from the immoral practices of Corinthian society, members of this congregation rationalized their sinful thinking and habits regarding sexual immorality with two catchphrases. Paul quoted the first in **verse 12** to explain that while Christians have freedom (from the Law), not all actions and behaviors are beneficial, including those that are not forbidden expressly. Consequently, Paul asserts that he would not allow his freedom in Christ to lead him to be controlled by anything (in this context, sexual desire). The second phrase in **verse 13** compares sexual immorality to any other natural activity, like eating. However, Paul explains that God will destroy food and the stomach because they are morally neutral and not part of God's divine plan for the body as an instrument to serve Him. Hence, Paul concludes that the body was not created for sexual immorality but for the Lord.

Paul further extends the body's spiritual importance by reminding the Corinthians that God would raise their bodies just as He raised Christ (**verse 14**). Thus, realizing that a future resurrection is the body's destiny, believers should treat it with reverent respect and care instead of using it to gratify fleshly desires. Understanding and acknowledging God's purpose for the body challenges believers to evaluate the following: how their use of it affects their spiritual growth; their physical and spiritual health; and whether how they use it leads to unhealthy

addictions. Additionally, because the body is for the Lord, believers are to use it to honor Him and serve others for His glory.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What spiritual disciplines enable believers to avoid allowing their freedom in Christ to lead to being controlled by desires or habits contrary to God's standards?

Honor the Body's Purpose (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)

KJV

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

NIV

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!

16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."

17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

At the center of Paul's argument, Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians of the spiritual nature of their union with Christ to underscore the spiritual principle that their behavior affects them and Christ (in particular, regarding sexual sin). Paul affirms that this union with Christ is the reason why Christians should avoid sexual immorality. He concludes that engaging in it by consorting with prostitutes is incompatible with this sacred union with Christ because the Christian's body is part of Christ's body (verse 15). Paul illustrates this principle

by quoting Genesis 2:24 and applies it to the bond that sexual unions create—which is intended for marriage and not casual encounters (**verse 16**). This union is more profound than physical contact and involves personality and emotions. Therefore, a believer's union with Christ forms a bond that affects them and the Savior (**verse 17**). Hence, Paul admonishes the Corinthians to intentionally avoid sexual immorality because of the adverse effects it has on the body physically and psychologically (**verse 18**). Paul's message is sobering when believers understand that everything they do with or to the body affects Christ because of their spiritual union with Him. Paul concludes by reminding the Corinthian Christians that their bodies are temples of the indwelling Holy Spirit, God's gracious gift, and they ultimately belong to Him because of Christ's costly sacrifice on the Cross for humanity's sin (**verse 19**). Therefore, Christians' only reasonable response is to use their bodies to glorify Him (**verse 20**). Noted biblical scholar John MacArthur concluded his exposition of this passage by stating, "Christians' bodies are God's temple, and a temple is for worship. Our bodies, therefore, have one supreme purpose: to glorify God." The truth and challenge of this conclusion should convict and motivate every believer to submit their bodies as living sacrifices daily to "sin less" in gratitude for being God's temple.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are some challenges to acknowledging that our bodies do not belong to us as Christians?

A Closing Thought

Paul's response to the problem of sexual immorality among Corinthian Christians provides several spiritual principles applicable to all Christians now. These vital principles include evaluating our actions based on their potential to enhance spiritual growth, intentionally avoiding behaviors that adversely impact our sacred union with Christ, prioritizing remembering that our bodies belong to God and are to be used to fulfill His purposes, living in a manner that respects and reverences the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence, proactively avoiding sexual immorality by "running away" from sexual temptation and sin by monitoring what we read, watch, and hear, and using our bodies to honor God with our behavior and worship.

Your Life

Paul emphasized that Christian freedom does not grant the license to sin because we are eternally saved by grace. Still, we are responsible for seeking spiritual insight to discern what actions are permissible and profitable for our continued spiritual growth and holistic livelihood. Therefore, consider committing to practicing the spiritual disciplines of meditation, reflection, solitude, and submission to the Holy Spirit to guide and control your thoughts and decisions to ensure that you use your body as an instrument for God.

Your World!

Our nation's society mirrors every issue plaguing the Christian church in Corinth. Regrettably, the twenty-first-century church's voice is not being heard, challenging these issues, especially those related to morality. The norm appears to be "mouth-closed, hands-off" among some congregations. Therefore, consider practical biblical ways in which your congregation's voice can be heard (like Paul's), take a stand, and hold to God's standards about sexuality and related moral issues instead of ignoring them for political and social convenience.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank You for redeeming us through Christ's costly sacrifice. We acknowledge that our bodies are not ours to use in any way other than to glorify and honor You as Your temples. Therefore, we seek the Holy Spirit's help to avoid any action or behavior that displeases You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson challenges us to explore accepting and reconciling cultural and religious differences and practices within the faith community.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, August 11	"A Light to the Nations"	(Isaiah 49:1-6)
TUESDAY, August 12	"God's Mercy Reaches All"	(Romans 9:14-24)
WEDNESDAY, August 13	"Salvation Is for All"	(Romans 10:1-15)
THURSDAY, August 14	"Privilege with Humility"	(Romans 11:16-29)
FRIDAY, August 15	"God Will Dwell in Our Midst"	(Zechariah 8:1-12)
SATURDAY, August 16	"Seek God Together"	(Zechariah 8:13-23)
SUNDAY, August 17	"Built into a Holy Temple"	(Ephesians 2:11-22)

NOTES
