

1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 7

The Gospel and Sexuality

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

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“12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

A. THE ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR BODIES

1. What were the 2 extreme (and incorrect) views of sexuality at the time of the Corinthians?

- If we are created with a sexual organ, it must be used

- 1 Cor. 6:12

- Being asexual equates to being holy

- 1 Cor. 7:1

1 Corinthians 6:12-13

“12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”

2. a) Compare the parallelism between the food/stomach vs the body/the Lord.

1 Corinthian 6:13	1 Corinthians 6:13-14
Food is meant for the stomach	The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord
The stomach for food	And the Lord for the body
God will destroy both one (stomach)	And God raised the Lord
And the other (food)	And will also raise us up by His power

b) What are the differences between one and the other?

- Food and stomach
 - Will be destroyed
 - Transient

- Sex and the body
 - Will be raised
 - Permanent

3. Corinth was a city famous for its prostitutes and immorality. How did some of the Corinthian Church incorrectly justify persisting in their sexual immorality?

- They rationalised their activities and the two slogans that appear in this text in verse 12 and 13 allow us a glimpse into their thinking. “Everything is permissible”.
- “Food is for the stomach” V 13a. This was the other slogan they paraded to justify their actions. They see that sex is just a natural part of our physical bodies. They see it as a physical appetite like hunger for food and it has to be filled without regard to moral boundaries.
- Both of these slogans are taken out of context and incorrectly justifies their actions
- Rationalising sin does not make it not a sin

4. What is the Biblical purpose of sexual union in marriage?

- The sexual union in marriage is to display the spiritual union and love that we enjoy with Christ

B. OUR BODIES ALREADY BONDED TO CHRIST’S

1 Corinthians 6:15

“15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!”

5. Why does extramarital sex (fornication/adultery) result in us being “torn away” as a member of Christ?

C. SEX IS MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

1 Corinthians 6:16-17

“16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

6. Sex is a unitive act. What does this mean?

- It is a unitive act whereby one gives himself or herself to another wholly to establish kinship
- It is a tool to express total commitment
- Physical expression of the marriage covenant

7. God designed the husband-wife relationship and sexual intimacy. What does sex reflect in our relationship with God? (In other words, what was God’s intended purpose for sex between a husband and a wife?)

- Reflects communion with God
- The exclusivity heightens the pleasure
- Echoes the future consummation of our relationship with God
- In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as the husband towards Israel
- God puts Himself in us - fruit is produced

8. What is the difference between lust and love?

Aspects	Lust	Love
Goal	Self-fulfilment	Love for a person
Partner	Object is anyone who can fulfil	Partner to build relationship

Purpose	Use the person	Serve the person
Commitment	If the person no longer fulfils need, cut him/her off	If the person no longer fulfils need, remain committed
Value	Devalues the person	Values the person

9. Is it truly possible to become one flesh with a prostitute? Why or why not?

- It is a distortion of the true one flesh act

1 Corinthians 6:17-18

“17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ”

10. Why is sexual sin a sin against the body?

- Sexual sin results in:
 - Intimacy without intention
 - Communion without commitment
- It disrupts the body’s most powerful and intimate way of communication in relationships (self-donation) for personal transformation
- When we use it outside of where it was designed to be, it destroys that capacity

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom

you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

11. How does sexual immorality damage the body in its capacity as the temple of the Holy Spirit?

12. What should motivate us to avoid sexual immorality?

- We have been bought with a price by Christ
- Our bodies belong to Him
- We ought to walk in a manner that is chaste, holy, and glorifying to Him

Takeaway

- A. The sexual union in marriage is to display the spiritual union and love that we enjoy with Christ**
- B. Extramarital sex is a distortion of the true one flesh act**
- C. Sexual sin disrupts the body's most powerful and intimate way of communication in relationships (self-donation) for personal transformation**
- D. We have been bought with a price by Christ**
 - a. Our bodies belong to Him**
 - b. We ought to walk in a manner that is chaste, holy, and glorifying to Him**

Case Study

Case 1 – Liberty?

Anthony Wong has been living with his wife at The Olive in Subang Jaya for the past 3 years. He is in an “open” relationship where there have been occasions where there have been other women. When he feels the urge he visits the ladies of the night in a club near by. His wife Amber was upset at first but since she does not like sex she no longer protested very much. He recently was at Alpha in church and was now struggling to make a decision about Christ and he is being counselled by different Alpha facilitators. When it comes to his life style he struggles and asks “Sex is so natural why does Christianity persists in being so old fashioned taking morals more than 2000 years ago and applying it to modern times. We should have liberty and be free”.

1. How does Paul counter these arguments put forward to justify immorality in 1 Cor. 6:13-14?

Paul does not dispute the liberty that they enjoyed, however taken just as it is, the truth is actually abused or stretched. Yes they were free but not everything that they did was going to be beneficial to them as he pointed out in verse 12. . The Corinthian who regards himself as a superior spiritual person so free that he is also free to have sex with prostitutes will ultimately find himself enslaved or mastered by a power stronger than the law. Immorality instead of releasing him will enslave him. The Non Christian concept of liberty is faulty as there can be no true liberty for everyone to do as they please. CK Barrett writes of Paul agreeing with the slogan ‘All things are permitted’, but he will not let it go without strict qualification. Christian liberty is not a licence, as a licence is less than liberty. In verse 13 Paul also agrees with them that sex is a physical drive and adds that both hunger and sexual desire will pass away in the future, that is they will not have permanent significance for us.

However, the Christian view of the body is not the same as the Gnostic view. For the Christian, his body is dedicated to God. It was designed in His image and purposed for His glory. What we do with our bodies is neither irrelevant nor inconsequential. The importance of the body is shown by the fact that God will raise our bodies from the dead just as He raised Jesus from the

dead. There is no concept of the separation of the soul and the body, they are one and the same and important.

2. Specifically, why is having sex with a prostitute wrong in 1 Cor. 6:15-17?

In verse 15 we see that when we become Christians we become incorporated into the church which is the wider body of Christ in the world. In this verse our physical bodies are emphasised and somehow are united with Christ. In verse 17 we are united with Him in spirit. Thus the emphasis of Paul is that our union with Christ involves the totality of ourselves physically and spiritually. There is no separation between body and soul as the Gnostics believe having sex with someone else involves our total self not just our genitals.

In verse 16 Paul points out that sex is a unique experience that involves the total person entering into a union with another person. The one flesh experience in Genesis 2 is referred to here. Why sex with a prostitute is wrong is because we would be entering into an intimate total relationship with someone in a manner which was going to be inconsistent with our union with Christ. The prostitute would belong to the sphere of Satan and the believer to the sphere of Christ their union would be totally incompatible with their underlying realities.

3. What is the final reason from verse 18-20 that Paul gives for not engaging with sexual immorality?

The final argument is based on our position individually now as the place where the Holy Spirit resides. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. How can we take the temple of God and unite it with the body of the prostitute, it would be wrong.

We are bought with a very great price, the blood of Christ. And as His slaves now, we are bound to obey only Him and dedicate our bodies to glorify Him.

Paul is influenced by OT especially Proverbs 6:25-33 where thief only forfeits his goods but sexual offender destroys himself.

The Corinthian slogan as they do not think the personality is affected and the body is morally irrelevant.

There is a difference between the sexual sins and others.

There is a difference in:

- Its destructiveness of its effects
- Its intrinsic sinfulness
- Its damaging effects especially upon the self

Christ violation

Body violation

Spirit violation

Contrary to Greco-Roman thought where the body exists in a lower plane with the spirit. Things like what we eat and what we drink and how we have sex is on the lower plane. Paul is saying that instead of this it does matter. It is how a person acts bodily in everyday life that reveals spiritually what it means to be in Christ.

Paul therefore instead of denigrating sex has placed it in a very high place. It is not a peripheral function.