

August 10, 2025

“Our Bodies Belong to God”
Lesson 2

1 Cor. 6:12-20

Intro

Last week’s lesson dealt with honoring God in how we deal with each other, by avoiding factions and groupings within the church. Today’s lesson continues Paul’s words to the Corinthians; his message in this passage deals with sexual immorality. The Greco-Roman culture of Paul’s time had standards of sexuality that are different from what we see today. One example is prostitution. In most places today, prostitution is illegal and seen negatively. This was not the view of the Greco-Roman 1st Century world. Marital fidelity was seen as more for the wife than for the husband—a definite double standard. Public parties might include prostitutes to entertain men after their wives had been excused from the party. The majority culture of that time considered this acceptable behavior.

Unfortunately, some members of the Corinthian church were involved in sexual behavior that even pagan Gentiles disapproved of (1 Cor. 5:1). Paul calls them out for this, seeing sexual sin as a threat to the purity of both the church and the individual. By contrast, he taught a different view of what constituted sexual immorality—which is what today’s lesson is about.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

1. vs. 12: The phrase “I have the right to do anything” appears to be a slogan used by the Corinthians
NT scholar Jay Smith says there are four things that indicate this to be the case
- 1) Slogans are brief and usually in the present tense
 - 2) Slogans are often repeated
 - 3) The wording here is not typical of how Paul writes, so is not his own thought
 - 4) They will be followed by a counterpoint from Paul

Paul offers two counter points in the rest of the verse

First, not all behaviors are beneficial

We are to consider whether an action is beneficial to determine its worth in doing

Second, some behaviors can become enslaving

This is particularly the case with sexual desires

Paul repeats the slogan here, with the warning that it may lead to being enslaved

Freedom in Christ does not mean freedom to do anything a person wants to do

2. vs. 13: A second Corinthian slogan appears to be at work here

Again, note the quotes—Paul is quoting something they are familiar with

“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”

The Corinthians seem to be equating one behavior with another

When we are hungry (have that desire), we eat

Logically then, when we have sexual desires, we fulfill them as well

Paul’s counter point is to address the bigger picture

God will destroy both—they don’t last forever

God designed the body to work the way He intended it to work

Food and stomach were designed to work together
This is not the case with the body and sexual *immorality*
The body is made for the Lord
God intends for us to keep our bodies for union with Christ
Unions that are sexually immoral are certainly not part of this plan

3. vs. 14: God is a keeper of His promises, says Paul
He raised Christ from the dead, and He will raise us as well
He has all power, and we are remember that so that we will continually submit to Him
There were some in Corinth who were denying the resurrection
Paul addresses that briefly here, but develops it more in chapter 15
4. vs. 15: Paul uses the term “members” here, indicating that each Christian is one part of the larger whole
Christ is the head of the church, and each Christian is a part (member) of His body
This is the first time Paul uses the term in this letter
He will use it 15 more times in 1 Corinthians
If were are united with Christ, we are a part of His body
Paul then asks a rhetorical question (one that doesn’t expect an answer)
“Shall I take the member of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!”
That which is part of Christ should never be connected to anything unholy
5. vs. 16: Sexual unions outside of marriage make the participants “one in body”
Gen. 2:24 says that a marital union makes a man and a woman “one flesh”
Intimacy outside of the marriage creates a second “one flesh”
This results in bringing another person into the marriage
This destroys God’s intent for marriage, and causes strife in the marriage
Things we do with our physical bodies affects the church body as well
6. vs. 17: Paul here emphasizes a Christian’s union with Christ
The implication is that sexual immorality has at least two negative results
It works against the marriage, and it works against one’s relationship with God
It is not possible to separate sexual behavior from one’s relationship with God
Therefore, the spiritual dimension must be the controlling factor
7. vs. 18: Paul issues a brief but direct command: “Flee from sexual immorality”
Paul’s explanation says that this sin is unique in that it alone is against one’s own body
He means that it causes damage to that intimate union between God and the person
It is unique in this result
This doesn’t mean it’s worse than any other sin; it is unique in the damage it causes
8. vs. 19: Paul reminds the Corinthian church again of the significance of their relationship with God
They are a temple of the Holy Spirit, the place where the Holy Spirit resides
He dwells in each individual believer, which is a sign of His ownership of that person
The Holy Spirit inhabits the church corporately and each believer individually
This relationship explain why engaging with a prostitute is inconsistent with Christianity
A vessel where the Holy Spirit lives cannot take part in such an unholy action

9. vs. 20: The phrase “bought with a price” would remind the readers of the slave market
There was a cost to redeeming a slave from slavery
The price for redeeming us from slavery to sin was the blood of Christ
Paul uses the past tense “bought” to show that ownership has been transferred
He finishes with an exhortation to “honor God with your bodies”
The transfer of ownership obligates the follower to honor God with spirit and body
It is hypocritical to honor God with the spirit but not with the body

Application: The main point of Paul’s argument in this passage is that those who follow Christ do not have full authority over their lives. We are members of Christ’s body, and therefore are a temple of and for the Holy Spirit. We belong to God and are called to act in ways that glorify God. We are called to live as those who belong to Him.

That requires our willingness to resist temptations. There may be some temptations that exist today that didn’t in Paul’s day, but the principles he teaches here remain valid in combating all temptations. He encourages his readers to embrace their identities in Christ by living as Christ’s body and the Holy Spirit’s temple.

Paul did not simply reject the inaccurate slogans of the Corinthians. And he didn’t command them to actions without explanation. He acknowledged that they had freedom in Christ, but how were they best using that freedom? That is a question that we need to reflect on in our Christian walk as well.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for making us part of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and His body the church. Help us to respect our bodies as belonging to You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.