

“God’s Principles for Our Bodies”

1 Cor. 6:12-20

- INTRO. - There are certain places in Scripture where we have clear commands from God. There are certain standards of right and wrong, that are clearly delineated by Almighty God, and they are forever established in His Word.
 - There are certain places in the Bible where God simply says, “This is right and this is wrong.” And when we see commands like that in the Word of God, our response should be immediate and complete obedience (no debate, no rationalization, no hesitation).
 - But let me go on to say that although some commands like that are contained in Scripture, the Bible is *not* primarily a book of commands (or rules). The Bible is primarily a book of *principles*.
 - Now, there are three main reasons *why* this is true:
 - 1.) If the Bible spelled out everything that is right and wrong in every circumstance, you would need a freight train to carry it around on. It would be too big and unwieldy to bring with you to church, etc.
 - 2.) If the Bible only consisted of rules (spelling out everything that is right or wrong), it would apply to one age rather than to all of time. Why is that? Because things have changed throughout history.
- Although there are some basic things that stay the same, there are many things that change – so what would apply to one age might *not* apply to another.
- For example, can you imagine someone in Corinth in the first century reading in Paul’s epistle that you should *not* watch R-rated movies? They would have no concept of what that means. So you get the idea...
 - 3.) If the Bible was only made up of rules (and *not* principles), people would probably find loopholes for how to get around the strict adherence to those rules.
 - As I’m sure you know, this was one of the problems with the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. They were only following the letter of the Law and *not* the spirit of the Law. They were constantly looking for ways to circumvent the Law for their own advantage.
 - But here’s the key: You can find loopholes in laws, but *not* in principles. It is just part of our human nature to look for loopholes. People are always looking for ways to bed the rules, but listen, when God’s Word gives us a principle, there is no way of circumventing it. Either you live by the principle or you don’t. (Pause)

- Now, in 1 Cor. 6:12-20 Paul is dealing *primarily* with the issue of sexual immorality. But (at the same time) he gives us some principles related to our physical bodies. He widens out the application to include a lot of other things that can have a drastic effect on our spiritual health (and well-being).
- So what I want to do (tonight) is to give you 9 principles (from this passage) that are (in effect) God's principles for our bodies. First, we have:

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY

- Look at the first part of v. 12, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable." The KJV has, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient."

- The word "expedient" comes from the same root word as the word for "expedition." It means "to go on a journey." It has in mind, that which will bring you to your ultimate destination.

- Think about it, how do we make up our minds when something is right and when something is wrong? One way to look at it is, to ask what is lawful. We could go to the letter of the Law and ask, "Is there something that the Bible says (specifically) about this?" In other words, "Does the Bible specifically condemn this or condone it?"

- Of course, we all know what the problem is with this. There are very few instances where we can go to the Bible and get such direct, specific instruction. The Bible doesn't deal with every specific situation, and yet there are many Christians who have taken this approach.

- Listen, I know people whose lives are totally "messed up" because they have taken the approach that says, "If the Bible doesn't clearly condemn a certain thing, then I am free to do it."

- This is why the principles of Scripture are so important. Paul says, "There are things that may be lawful for me (in other words, they are *not* specifically condemned in Scripture), but that does *not* mean that I should participate in them."

- There are some higher principles to consider, and the first one is whether or *not* this action (or activity) is going to profit me spiritually. Paul says that it is *not* simply a matter of looking at what is lawful. You also have to consider that is going to help or hinder your spiritual advancement.

- You should ask yourself, "Is this something that will be an anchor that will keep me out of God's harbor, or will it help to propel me toward my God-given goals?" That's the principle of expediency. But then we see:

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF ENSLAVEMENT

- Look at v. 12 again, “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.” The ESV has the word “enslaved.” There are things that are “lawful” (they are *not* specifically condemned in Scripture) yet they are *not* good for me because they are enslaving.

- Paul says that a second guideline to follow (as we try to determine right from wrong) is that we should *not* actively participate in anything that controls us.

- Anything that *hinders* us in our spiritual growth must be *avoided*, and anything that *masters* us (other than Christ) must be *surrendered*.

- You see, the Bible says that Jesus Christ came to set us free. Let me ask you something tonight: Are you free in Christ? Or is there something in your life that has you mastered? It may be alcohol, or nicotine, or the TV, or sports, or eating too much, or laziness, or pornography, or drugs, or any number of other things.

- Paul says, that if anything masters you (other than Christ), it is hindering you from being all God

wants you to be. It needs to be surrendered to His Lordship.

- Listen, our freedom in Christ does *not* mean we have the license to do what we want. That’s why Paul said (in Gal. 5:13), “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh...”

- Paul is saying that we must never allow the liberty He has given us to cause us to become enslaved to any bodily appetite or desire. We ought *not* to have any habits in our lives that are controlling us.

- We should be constantly evaluating our lives to see if there is anything other than Christ that is determining our behavior. Thirdly, we see:

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF EXCUSES

- Look at v. 13, “Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body.”

- Look at that first phrase again, “Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food.” Now, I’m calling this the principle of excuses because that is exactly what this is. This phrase was their rationalization for their sin.

- The argument went like this: “Didn’t God make food? (Of course He did.) And didn’t God make the stomach (with the natural desire to eat)? (Yes.) Well then, if God made us that way, then we have to conclude that it must be God’s will for us to eat. Right?”

- This sounds reasonable enough. But what they were doing *then*, is they were saying, “Well, if that is true of our bodily desire for food, then our natural desire for sexual fulfillment must be the same way.” And in this way they were rationalizing sexual immorality.

- Folks, this is as relevant in our day as it was back then. This kind of reasoning sounds like what we would hear (today) if we visited any secular College campus.

- Listen to the words of Playboy founder Hugh Hefner just a few years ago: “Sex is a function of the body. A drive which man shares with animals. Like eating, drinking, and sleeping. It’s a physical demand that must be satisfied. If you don’t satisfy it you will have all sorts of neurosis and repression psychosis. Sex is here to stay. Let’s forget the prudery that makes us hide from it. Throw away those inhibitions, find a girl who’s like-minded and let yourself go.”

- This has become the basic pattern of thinking today, but listen, just because God created us with a physical composition that include a sex-drive, does not mean that we have the license to fulfill it any way we choose.

- Reasoning like this is (really) nothing but a high-sounding excuse. It is a rationalization that enables us to get what we want.

- The Corinthian culture (like ours) was saturated with sexual immorality. As Warren Wiersbe points out, “While we cannot excuse the Corinthians for their terrible sins, we can certainly understand why they fell into them; no city presented more opportunities for immorality and vice than did Corinth. The very religion of the city (the worship of Aphrodite) was nothing but prostitution in the name of religion! These believers had been rescued from lives of horrible sin but were tempted to go back. Paul knew that some of the believers were looking for excuses to sin, so he clearly refuted every argument that they might bring up.”

- *Here* Paul de-rails their excuse by saying that “while it is true that the stomach and food were made for each other, it is also true that their relationship is purely temporal.”

- Someday (when their purpose is fulfilled) God will do away with both of them. That biological process has no place in the eternal state.

- But that is *not* true of the body itself. God has a purpose for the bodies of believers that is much higher than mere biological functions. Paul says, “The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body.”

- Do you see what that does? That establishes a spiritual relationship between your body and the Lord Jesus. There is a spiritual aspect to your body that was *not* present before you became a believer.

- There is a higher purpose for the use of your body than to use it for sexual immorality (or any other use that does *not* honor Christ).

- The principle for us (here) is to let go of our excuses. We cannot rationalize sexual immorality by saying that it is simply a natural biological function (like eating). By the way, any other excuse is equally useless. Forget the excuses and do God’s will! Fourthly we see:

IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF ENABLEMENT

- One of the most common excuses among Christians today is, “Well, I just can’t help myself.” Listen carefully, for a genuine believer in Christ, the idea that we just can’t help ourselves is a lie straight from the pit of hell.

- Look with me at v. 14, “Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.” You say, “What is a verse about the resurrection doing in the middle of a passage about sexual immorality?”

- I believe it is a reminder to us, that before we start to say, “I can’t help myself,” God says, “Remember that the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is there for you to raise you up in victory over sin and the flesh.” This is the principle of enablement. We are more than able to overcome through His power. Fifthly, there is:

V. THE PRINCIPLE OF INFIDELITY

- Look at v. 15, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be!”

- Verse 16, “Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, ‘The two will become one flesh.’” Verse 17, “But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

- I want you to understand what Paul is saying here. In very graphic language, he is saying that when a person participates in sexual immorality, they are defiling Christ Himself.

- He says that when you engage in sexual union with a harlot (for example) you are actually engaging the members of Christ Himself with harlotry.

- Two people becoming one flesh *not only* applies in marriage, but it can also apply to an adulterous relationship or to fornication (which is sex before marriage). There is a oneness that is created, and there is a defilement of Christ in the process.

- And guess what folks, there is no such thing as “undoing” that union. I sometimes hear people (today in Christian circles) talking about “secondary virginity.” Folks, there is no such thing! You cannot undo fornication. You cannot undo adultery.

- ILL. – A child asked a man to pick a flower for her. That was simple enough. But when she said, “Now put it back,” the man experienced a baffling helplessness he never knew before. “How can you explain that it cannot be done?” he asked. “How can one make clear to young people that there are some things which, when once broken (once mutilated), can never be replaced or mended?”

- Of course there is forgiveness for any sin. But the consequences of that sin cannot be reversed. We see that clearly in the story of King David. He was extremely sorrowful for his sin with Bathsheba, but the baby still died.

- Please understand – if you are a Christian, your sin *not only* affects you – it also effects Christ Himself. And Paul, so abhorred by that thought, shouts, “May it never be!” “Don’t ever let that happen!” #6:

VI. THE PRINCIPLE OF ESCAPE

- What is the first word of v. 18? FLEE! Look at it, “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”

- Don’t just turn aside from it; don’t just walk away from it; don’t just try to resist it – run from it!!! Why? Because it is unique from every other kind of sin. In Paul’s words, all other sins are outside the body; but this one is against the body.

- What is he saying? I believe that this is an acknowledgment of how deeply sexual sin goes to the *core* of our being. No other sin that a person can commit has as many built-in problems and destructive potential as sexual sin.

- God’s advice for avoiding sexual involvement outside of its rightful bounds of marriage, is to stay as far away as possible from people and places that are likely to get you into trouble.

- By the way, I personally believe that includes allowing your children to begin dating too early (or even dating at all). How often do young teens get themselves in trouble by getting into a tempting situation this way?

- But the principle here, is to get yourself out of any environment where you are likely to be tempted sexually. That means that there are places you should *not* go. It means that there are certain things you should *not* watch on TV or at the movies. It means that there are certain people that you should avoid being with. It means that there are certain situations in which you should *not* place yourself. Principle #7:

VII. THE PRINCIPLE OF INDWELLING

- Look at v. 19, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

- Think about this – God Himself has taken up residence in you. Your body is the temple of the HS.

- ILL. – Think about it this way – what would you think, if you came to church next Sunday morning and there was trash all over the place? Would you be OK with that?

- ILL. – Or what would you think if you came in here to worship next Sunday and there were people in here committing sexual sins? What would you think about that?

- Folks, (as detestable as that is, even to think about) this is exactly what Paul is saying here. He’s saying that all sexual sin is abhorrent to God because your body is the temple of the HS.

- Listen, it doesn’t matter whether sexual sin is committed in a back alley or in some more “respectable” place, all sexual sin (by believers) is committed in the presence of the indwelling Spirit of God. Principle #8:

VIII. THE PRINCIPLE OF ENTITLEMENT

- Notice the last part of v. 19 and the first part of v. 20, “...and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price...”

- We are no longer our own possession. We have been bought with a price. Jesus Christ now owns the title to our bodies. They no longer belong to us.

- ILL. – Back in Paul’s day, a slave could set himself free by saving his money and depositing it with the priest at the local heathen temple. When he had enough money to purchase his freedom, he would take his master to the temple and the priest

would give the master the money and declare that the slave now belonged to that particular god.

- This is what is being pictured here. The Son of God has paid the price to purchase us and to set us free from our former master (sin). But, as a result of this, we are now to please our new Master in how we use our bodies.

- As the Apostle Peter put it (in 1 Peter 1:17-19), "...conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

- ILL. – You have probably seen signs like this many times. When a company takes over another company, there is often a sign placed outside the premises announcing, "Under New Management."

- No sign so accurately summarizes what takes place in Christian conversion than that. When Christ takes over a life, that life is literally "under new management." And yet, how hard it seems for us to learn this lesson, and to acknowledge the new authority in our lives!

- How hard it is for those who have obeyed the flesh for so long, to begin to obey the Lord Jesus Christ! But that is what is required for every

Christian. Jesus Christ has purchased us with His shed blood on Calvary – and that leads us to our last principle:

IX. THE PRINCIPLE OF EXALTATION

- If all this is true (which it is), then what is the conclusion? "Therefore glorify God in your body." This will answer a thousand questions concerning the body right here. Rather than asking if a certain dress is the latest style, you should rather ask, "Will this glorify God?"

- Rather than asking who else is doing this, you should ask, "Will this glorify God?" Instead of asking if this activity is something that will make me feel good, you should ask, "Will this glorify God?"

- What you see with your eyes, hear with your ears, say with your lips, or do with your body should all be for the glory of God.

- Paul put it another way in the letter to the Romans. He said, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." (Rom. 12:1)

- PRAYER