

What's a Body For?  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20  
January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

1. Outside of marriage, sex can be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . (6:12)
2. Our bodies are for the \_\_\_\_\_ . (6:13-14)
3. Our bodies are members of \_\_\_\_\_ . (6:15-17)
4. Sexual sin is not uniquely sinful but it is \_\_\_\_\_ damaging. (6:18)

Our bodies are \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit. (6:19-20)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

1. What do you think has led to the current confusion about sexuality in our culture?
2. If you have access to multiple Bible translations (NASB, NIV, ESV, CSB, etc.), what do you notice about how they translate v. 12?
3. In what way are the stomach and food for each other? How does that relate to our bodies and the Lord in v. 13?
4. Read Romans 6:1-4. What question is Paul addressing in v. 1? How does he answer that question by explaining our union with Christ? In what way is a similar point being made in 1 Cor. 6:15-17?
5. Why do you think the command is to “flee” immorality in v. 18? What does the term “flee” tell us about how we are to avoid it and respond to temptation?
6. In what way do you think sexual sin is uniquely against our own bodies? (v. 18)
7. What does it practically mean to glorify God in our bodies? (v. 20) How specifically does it relate to the point of the passage?

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Big idea: Our bodies are the Lord's so we should glorify Him in our bodies through sexual purity.

Intro

The command in this passage is two simple words in verse 18 – Flee immorality.

The context and the word itself make it clear that it is sexual sin that is in mind. And we are to flee it. It literally means to take flight, to escape, to avoid. It's the same word used of herdsmen who ran away after their herd of pigs died in Matthew 8:33.

Why? Isn't it just a physical act? What's the big deal? That's the argument from the Corinthians and that is the argument today. Casual hook ups are the expected norm for young people. Intimacy on screen while not new is increasingly common, especially as many programs are on streaming services without the same regulations on over the air broadcasts on TV.

While the verses before this listed sexual sin among 10 items that should not characterize the life of a Christian as a pattern, it did not develop a lengthy explanation as to why. This passage gives us the "why" – why is sex outside of marriage a big deal? Why does God care what we do with our bodies? If you have ever wondered about those questions, we find part of the answer here.

1. Outside of marriage, sex can be ***destructive*** and ***controlling***. (6:12)
  - a. "All things are lawful for me" is likely a quote from the Corinthians.
    - i. Most English translations put those words in quotes.
    - ii. It may be a twisting of a theological truth that they are free in Christ because they are forgiven in Christ so they can do whatever they want.
    - iii. Similar to the error that Paul confronts in Romans 6
      1. **Romans 6:1-2** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?
      2. In response to the radical forgiveness that is rooted solely in Jesus' perfect righteousness given to us, the common response is, "I guess I'm free to sin then if I'm saved by grace." In both passages the answer is a resounding "No."
    - iv. Paul had emphasized freedom from the law, freedom from a performance mentality, but they misunderstood this as a freedom *to sin*.
      1. **Galatians 5:1** It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
      2. **Galatians 5:13** For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
    - v. Illustration - like a parent who says to their child, "you can eat anything you want for dinner" and the child decides to run with that by getting ice cream and covering it with crushed up cereal and chocolate sauce and marshmallows. That's not what the parent meant! They implied a qualifier of "anything that is a dinner food that we have on hand in the fridge right now."
  - b. Sex is designed to unite a husband and wife as one flesh (v. 16), and it is powerfully effective at that. Used in the wrong context the power is still there and the pleasure is still there, but it wreaks havoc instead.

- i. **Proverbs 5:3-5** For the lips of an adulteress drip honey And smoother than oil is her speech; <sup>4</sup> But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. <sup>5</sup> Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol.
    - 1. There is a powerful enticement to sexual sin, but the end is harm for those involved when not united in marriage.
  - ii. The Bible is not being prudish about sex, it's just warning about the misuse. A few verses later it says:
  - iii. **Proverbs 5:18-19** Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. . . Be exhilarated always with her love.
- c. Sex can also be highly controlling. Whole counseling industries related to sexual addiction have come up because that's our cultural term for something that is controlling and hard to break free from.
2. Our bodies are for the **Lord**. (6:13-14)
- a. Food is for the stomach, the stomach for food
    - i. Likely another quote from the Corinthians.
    - ii. In what way is food for the stomach and vice versa?
      - 1. They were created to go together – we have stomachs because we need food. Food is created by God to go in our stomachs. Neither would make sense without the other.
  - b. The pattern is repeated with the body and the Lord
    - i. Our very bodies are made for the Lord, not simply our souls or spirits (interchangeable terms). The Lord cares about what we do with our physical bodies.
    - ii. Some may have been arguing that the we clearly have sexual urges so that is what our bodies are “for” – why deny it! Why suppress or control it! But the body is not “for immorality” – it's for the Lord. He made us. He will raise up our bodies. He has united us to Jesus. He has bought us at a price.
  - c. God will even raise up our bodies – they are not unimportant to Him.
    - i. Their argument was that what we did with our bodies is unimportant to God. It was part of Greek philosophy that the body was inherently bad or at least irrelevant. It was the spirit that was good/important.
    - ii. Paul reminds them that God is even “for” our bodies.
  - d. Your body is not an accident. Your body is not evil. Your body is not to be loathed or hated. God truly loves you and is for you, and your body is part of you.
    - i. This may be helpful to hear for someone who feels a mismatch between their gender identity and their body, known as gender dysphoria.
    - ii. Gender dysphoria has been recognized for decades. There is a sense of a mismatch between the inner perception of gender and the outer, physical, biological gender. That experience is real and often painful. The solution in the past is to help people integrate their inner perception with the outer reality. Now the solution is to ignore or even radically change the outer reality to match inner perception. That is a destructive path, literally. The reality is that your gender is stamped on literally every cell of your body in your chromosomes and it is good.
    - iii. Nancy Percy in Love Thy Body: “Biblical morality expresses a high view of the dignity and significance of the body. The biblical view of sexuality is not based on a few scattered Bible verses. It is based on a teleological worldview that encourages us to live in accord with the physical design of our bodies. ... respecting the body... heals self-alienation and creates integrity

and wholeness. The root of the word integrity means whole, integrated, unified— our mind and emotions in tune with our physical body. The biblical view leads to a wholistic integration of personality. It fits who we really are.”

1. Teleological is a fancy word that simply means to look to the purpose for which something was made. You look at a hammer with the handle to hold and the end to hit things with and you release the teleological purpose of this hammer is to whack things. Likewise, we can see how God made our bodies and know what He made them for.

3. Our bodies are members of ***Christ***. (6:15-17)

- a. “Do you not know” implies that we should know
- b. We are united to Him
  - i. **Ephesians 5:28-30** So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; <sup>29</sup> for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of His body.
  - ii. **1 Corinthians 12:27** Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.
- c. Prostitution is given specific focus because of how common it was in the ancient world.
  - i. Steven Um – prostitution in the ancient world was a much more culturally acceptable sexual practice than it is today. It wouldn't have been out of the ordinary for a man to end a hard day's work with a visit to a brothel. A man's wife was for bearing heirs, for securing strategic political and social alliances, but not so much for sexual pleasure.
- d. He reminds them of the unique bonding effect of physical intimacy – the two become one flesh!
  - i. God is not embarrassed by sex. It was His idea! He doesn't blush when it comes up in pre-marriage counseling. His Spirit is not present everywhere except in the bedroom. But just like a fire provides warmth and light and comfort in the fireplace but destruction outside the fireplace, so sex is a powerful and good in the fireplace of marriage but dangerous outside of marriage.
  - ii. (Paraphrased from Um) Some might say this picture is rather dramatic. Sex doesn't have to be about all of that. It can be casual, without all of the baggage coming along with it, some say. Can it really? Paul says in v 16 that in sex “the two...become one flesh.” There's an inevitable uniting effect that happens when you have sex. Lewis Smedes, “Nobody can go to bed with someone and leave his soul parked outside.”
  - iii. Craig Blomberg: “Because sex reflects the most intimate of interpersonal relations among humans, it should be reserved for the most permanent of interpersonal commitments.”
  - iv. Analogy - Talked with a retiree who was giving his early retirement years to helping with construction projects in Russia. He said one of his goals was to help the Russians who were serving with him to use tools for their intended purposes. A flat head screwdriver shouldn't be used as a chisel. It kind of works but after a while it ruins the screwdriver and doesn't do good construction work.

4. Sexual sin is not uniquely sinful but it is ***uniquely*** damaging. (6:18)

- a. All sin is sin. All sin is serious.
  - i. Last week we looked at a list of 10 items, all of which are serious, but only 4 of which had to do with sexual sin in any way.
- b. Paul identifies this as a particularly destructive sin because of the harm against the own person. We can see this, and not just in the possibility of certain disease, but in the way sex is designed to weld two people together but when cheapened to a commodity to be bought and sold it weakens the bonds it

was designed to create and in spite of the promise of the culture that sexual conquests can be harmless fun, it leaves wounds.

- i. These wounds can be healed by Christ, the sin can be forgiven by Christ.
- ii. Remember that the last verse ended with “such were some of you...but” – this doesn’t need to be the end of our spiritual story.
- iii. We don’t minimize the harm that can come from misusing sex, so there is a warning ahead of time. But we also want to clearly extend what Jesus extends to those who have already gone down that road and now they want to change directions. Jesus offers forgiveness, so freely and so fully.
- iv. The storyline of the Bible is littered with characters who messed up in these very areas – from Judah who visited a prostitute but it turned out to be his own daughter in law, to David who took another man’s wife, to Solomon who took many wives, to Rahab who was herself a prostitute.
- v. The Bible doesn’t pretend these stories don’t exist and the Bible doesn’t push them off into the margins. They are in the text in black and white because they are in our lives and experiences as well.
- vi. Jesus doesn’t offer hypothetical forgiveness for hypothetical sins – he offers real forgiveness for us real sinners.

5. Our bodies are **temples** of the Holy Spirit. (6:19-20)

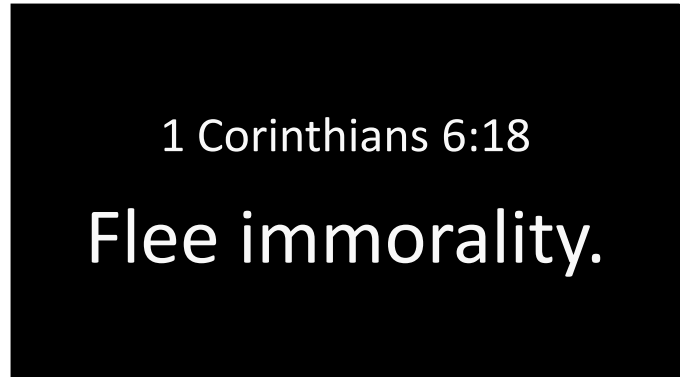
- a. God is not far away from the Christian. His Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of us.
- b. So we are not our own to do whatever we want with our bodies.
  - i. Is there anything more contradictory to modern beliefs?
    1. This flies in the face of modern contemporary thought. Radical self-autonomy is assumed.
    2. I can be who I want to be. I can define my own life. I can define my own gender. To argue against this is arguing against another defeater belief.
    3. Andrew Walker on Trueman - Any claim, then, that would threaten one’s self-chosen sense of self-conception, sexual freedom, and therapeutic needs is not only improper, but possibly criminal. No longer does a person understand himself as made in God’s image, but rather as someone whose identity is endlessly pliable according to his own desires and felt needs.
    4. Carl Trueman has identified this as a key issue in our time in his recently released book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*: “Every age has had its darkness and its dangers. The task of the Christian is not to whine about the moment in which he or she lives but to understand its problems and respond appropriately to them.”
- c. We have been bought with a price, therefore we should glorify God in our bodies. (6:20)
  - i. The price was Jesus Himself.
  - ii. I had always read this as if the “in your body” part was superfluous. It was a command to glorify God with all your life. We are to do that but it’s specific here. Glorify God with what you do with your body.

6. Conclusion

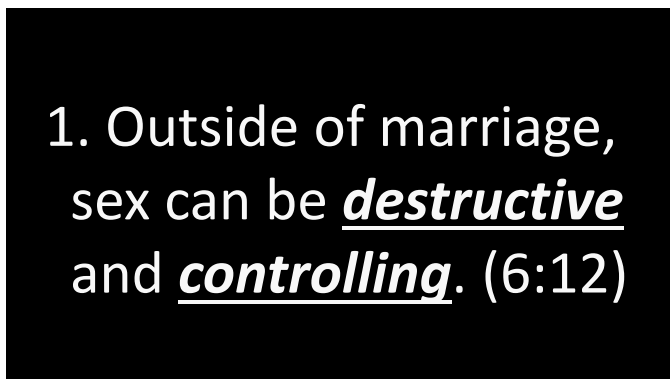
- a. Two dangers from a passage like this that puts it's finger on an area of sin – pride because we think we haven't sinned as bad others in this area, overwhelming guilt because we know we have sinned and now we feel broken, ruined, and without hope.
  - i. To speak to the first – we are all sinners in general and, I think we can say, besides the young we are all sexual sinners in particular.
    - 1. **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
    - 2. **Matthew 5:27-28** "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; <sup>28</sup> but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
    - 3. Jesus looks beyond external actions to what goes on in the human heart.
  - ii. To speak to the second danger – feeling broken, ruined, and without hope -
    - 1. Puritan Richard Sibbes: "There's more mercy in Christ than sin in us."
    - 2. "Our sins they are many, His mercy is more."
    - 3. He doesn't just take the legal guilt of sin away, He washes us and transforms us and gives us a future and a hope.



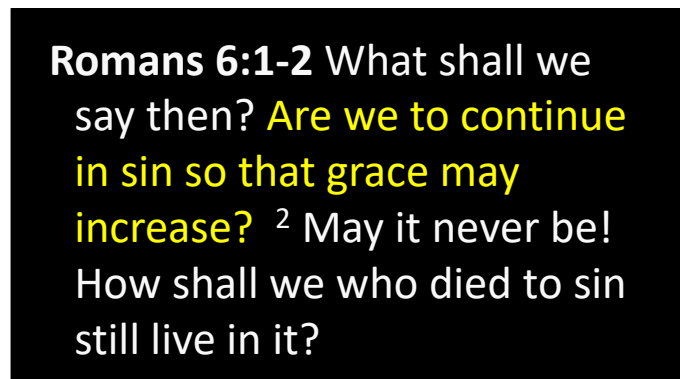
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