

## 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

<sup>12</sup>“All things are permitted for me”—but not all things are beneficial. “All things are permitted for me”—but I will not allow anything to control me. <sup>13</sup>“Foods are for the belly, and the belly is for foods, but God will do away with both of them.” However, the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup>God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then remove the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup>Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For it says, “The two will become one flesh.” <sup>17</sup>But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

<sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

### Flee Immorality

#### I.

Reality TV shows in the genre of the Bachelor and Bachelorette shows or the Real Housewives shows or shows about people like the Kardashians have something in common with nature shows. All of them seem to be about instincts and appetites.

When you watch a nature show its all about instinct and survival. Animals just seek to fill their appetites. The survival of the individual and the species depends on filling those appetites.

So many genres of reality TV seem to be about nothing more than filling appetites—or lusts. Of course, the theme extends well beyond reality TV. Scripted comedies and dramas have as a major element a certain lack of moral sexual behavior. Characters move with scarcely a comment from bed to bed to bed, often without consequence.

Do you ever wonder if the enlightened society of today and the culture rot we see in this society started with Christians? When praying for his disciples, Jesus said: “The world hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14, EHV).

Sometimes followers of Jesus just get tired of being hated. So we accept the bed hopping. We accept homosexual behavior. We adopt the social norm that says we ought not to care what goes on in someone else’s bedroom, as long as it’s between two consenting adults. It’s all part of enlightened society.

It’s nothing new, even among Christians. Greek society was hyper-enlightened, too. Paul quotes what seems to be a common conception of the day: “Foods are for the belly, and the belly is for foods” (1 Corinthians 6:13, EHV). The Greek view of life was that sexual intercourse was just as natural and necessary and justifiable as eating and drinking. It was just filling a natural appetite. “This is the way we are, there can’t be anything wrong with it,” was the idea of the time.

Even back then, believers got tired of being singled out as prudes—hated by the world because they were not of the world, as Jesus put it. So they hemmed and they hawed and

they compromised and they equivocated, and pretty soon Christians in Corinth started creating ways to call all kinds of sexual sins adiaphora: things neither commanded nor forbidden by God. When it comes to adiaphora, they said: “All things are permitted for me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, EHV).

Paul doesn’t let that stand. “All things are permitted for me’—but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are permitted for me’—but I will not allow anything to control me. <sup>13</sup>‘Foods are for the belly, and the belly is for foods, but God will do away with both of them’” (1 Corinthians 6:12-13, EHV). Greek culture might have seen no difference between sexual appetites and hunger for food, but Paul says the comparison is completely invalid. God calls sex outside the marriage bond of one man and one woman sin. No matter what scenario you try to paint, or how you try to rationalize it by societal norms, it is still sin.

Paul says that sexual sin is particularly insidious. “The body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup>God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then remove the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?” (1 Corinthians 6:13-15, EHV).

Just a few chapters after our text Paul talks about the church as the body of Christ. He calls each of us parts of—or members of—the body. In the gospel of John, Jesus says: “I am the Vine; you are the branches” (John 15:5, EHV). Believers have been grafted into the Vine, which is Christ. Sexual sins hack away at the graft and graft it into something evil. “Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18, EHV). As evil as every sin is, it is a sin outside the body. Sexual immorality is especially shameful, Paul says. That’s why in Old Testament Law the penalties for sexual sins were so harsh.

## II.

As much as Paul concentrates on sexual sins, some people are plagued by them more than others. Some perhaps don’t have those particular “appetites” to the same degree as other people. Paul was such a person. He never married, and seemed to imply through some of his writings that being single was one of his particular gifts from God.

Something he says applies to everyone. “I will not allow anything to control me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, EHV).

The first part of dealing with a problem is admitting you have one. Recovering addicts will tell you that. But how? All those 12-step programs out there have as one of their steps “recognizing a higher power.” They generally don’t define the higher power, but they *do* tell you that to escape addiction on your own willpower, without any assistance, is next to impossible.

“I will not allow anything to control me” means “I will not allow sin to control me.” Every single Christian is a recovering sinner. Recovering addicts will tell you that you are *never* a “former” addict, always a “recovering” addict. The process is never-ending. Each day the recovering addict chooses to continue the quest to sobriety. As long as a Christian lives, he or she is a recovering sinner, at best. Mere willpower isn’t going to keep sin from controlling you—it takes a higher power, and not a generic one, either.

## III.

Sin is a heavy topic, particularly sexual sin. Paul sprinkles the gospel throughout his discussion on these monumental sins.

“However, the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup>God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (1 Corinthians 6:13-

14, EHV). Part of the Greek Christians' argument that sexual sins weren't all that serious had to do with an idea they had that the body wasn't really all that important. It was just a vessel—an earthly container. They didn't feel that the body figured too prominently in their life after death. Paul tells them the body is *not* insignificant. Why would Jesus himself find it important to rise from the grave bodily after he completed the work of salvation? Why would Jesus tell us again and again that we will be raised on the Last Day? The body is important. It is for the Lord.

Paul said: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 6:15, EHV). We mentioned that Paul speaks about the church as the body of Christ. He says: “Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we all were baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, EHV). This means that your body is an important part of your spiritual life.

Most importantly of all, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, EHV). The Lord Jesus has redeemed you. He paid a high price to buy you back from the sin which enslaved you. Now—as a believer—your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit because you are a member of the body of Christ, who is the new temple of God.

#### IV.

The other lessons for today's service focused on God calling his servants. Samuel was called by God to be his prophet in the Old Testament Lesson. The Gospel shows us Jesus calling two of his disciples—Philip and Nathaniel. They got to see Jesus' omniscience—his knowledge of all things. He told them their life of service to their Savior would give them the opportunity to see far greater things than that.

God's call isn't just for those who serve the church full time. *Every* believer has been called to be a child of God. As a believer who understands that you have been redeemed and forgiven by the blood of Christ, “Flee from sexual immorality!... <sup>19</sup> “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you... You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20, EHV).

This is what moves you, energizes you, empowers you! Even though you are a recovering sinner who still falls prey to temptation day after day, you live in the forgiveness of Jesus. You know that what you have been given is freedom in Christ. Freedom to live in Christ does not mean living in opposition to Christ, as if forgiveness is a license to go on sinning, but instead: “Therefore glorify God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20, EHV).

Never give up. Never give in. The struggle against sin will consume every day in your life, but you live each day knowing that the victory is yours in Christ Jesus. Live in his strength, in his power, and in his love. Amen.