

The unfolding of your words gives light.

The Temple of God

An Exposition of 1 Corinthians

¹²All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable^a. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything^b. ¹³Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them^c. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body^d. ¹⁴Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power^e. ¹⁵Do 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 prostitute? May it never be!^f ¹⁶Or do you not

^a 6:12 **All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable.** Paul repeats this unusual “all things are lawful” phrase twice in chapter ten (10:23). Was this Paul’s belief? It certainly does not mean that Christians can do whatever they want as long as they think it helps people or causes. Many interpreters persuasively argue that Paul is quoting a wrong idea the Corinthians believed and then refuting it. Jesus did this:

You have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not commit murder” and “Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.” But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, “You good-for-nothing,” shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, “You fool,” shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. Matthew 5:21-22

If this idea is correct, the following phrases should be seen with this pattern: “[What the people say], but [the real truth is].” So here the people may have argued that they were legally free to do as they pleased in the area of sexuality. Paul argued that this attitude makes you miss what is “profitable” or *better*.

^b 6:12 **All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.** Again Paul couples a statement of legality with a refutation. It may be legal, but even things that are legal can enslave you.

^c 6:13 **Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them.** The people of Corinth may have reasoned that a simple biological function like eating has nothing to do with a relationship with God. That far the logic might work. But the people of that day (and now people in our day) took the next step and said that sex is merely a biological function.

If we continue using the suggested pattern of the previous verse, Paul’s refutation is that one day your relationship with food will dramatically change. Food is great and the parts of the body that digest it are great, but it would be very shortsighted to allow food to rule your existence. There are better things to live for. The reason sex is in a very different category than eating is because it involves all of you. That is why God called the worship of idols spiritual adultery.

^d 6:13 **Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.** If you are battling with sexual sin you need to know that your body was created for a much higher purpose. The reason you have a body is to glorify God. He gets to set the boundaries and they are wonderful boundaries.

^e 6:14 **Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.** You will have a body forever. That is the purpose-filled design of God. Make sure you are using it now for eternal purposes.

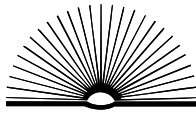
^f 6:15 **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!** Of course the immoral practices of the worship of Aphrodite were the local issue at Corinth. First century historians detailed how much money sailors brought to town and spent at the temple. All the men

The Epistle of 1 Corinthians
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know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH^g.”¹⁷ But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*^h.¹⁸ Flee immoralityⁱ. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body^j.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^k?²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body^{l,m}.

and women involved in these practices spent their money and their bodies. Paul says that if you belong to Christ those things are not yours to spend.

^g 6:16 **Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.”** This does not mean that sexual relations create a new marriage. Some have concluded that premarital sex necessitates “shotgun” marriage based on this “one flesh” statement. Quite the opposite is true. This text calls the sexually immoral to run from those relationships. Rebels have used this to rationalize living in sin because “In God’s eyes we’re married anyway.” Paul’s point is that the symbolism of the one flesh union God designed for a husband and wife is destroyed when you bring outsiders into the bedroom.

There is no such thing as casual sex. This is more than a biological function.

^h 6:17 **But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.** This is about more than acts between consenting adults. This is about breaking covenant with the Lord Jesus and your spouse or future spouse.

ⁱ 6:18 **Flee immorality.** This is the summary challenge after all this teaching. Joseph did this. Paul gave similar counsel to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:22) and told the church at Ephesus that there should not even be a hint of immorality in the church:

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.
Ephesians 5:3

^j 6:18 **Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.** This does not mean you have need to forgive yourself if you have been immoral. The point is that sexual sin is in a special class because it involves all of you. The writer of Proverbs warns us the same way:

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light;
And reproofs for discipline are the way of life
To keep you from the evil woman,
From the smooth tongue of the adulteress.
Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her capture you with her eyelids.
For on account of a harlot *one is reduced* to a loaf of bread,
And an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Proverbs 6:23-26

^k 6:19 **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?** Imagine a Hebrew man bringing a pagan temple prostitute to Jerusalem and welcoming her into the temple’s holy place. That is the picture here.

You live in a temple that is not yours. God’s temple is a place of worship, but sexual sin desecrates this place. Certainly there are other sins that do this, but in sexual sin you give entirely to another what belongs only to God.

^l 6:20 **For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.** It is quite accurate, as some have said, “You do not have a soul. You *are* a soul. You live in a body.”

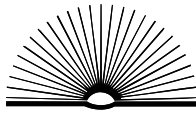
The point is that you are a renter. That means that your owner sets the boundaries for how His property will be used.

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^m 6:12-20 The standard Valentine's Day candy greeting "Be Mine" has become the idolatrous way of viewing relationships. We crave to possess another as our own and we behave in ways to get what we want. Inside the bonds of marriage this is largely correct. Because God is so gracious, you do belong to your husband or wife. Inside that union is great pleasure. Outside the bonds of marriage, however, you cannot and should not own another person. The bigger picture is that you both belong to Christ.

This text has been used through the years in sermons against tobacco. While there are some habits that make you a poor steward of your body, Paul is addressing a much deeper area of sin here than smoking and chewing. At issue is using for selfish ends a body that was designed for worship.

If you are reading this and have been flirting with or harboring sexual sin, there is hope for you. Consider from this text the ways to keep your body a suitable place of worship:

1. Discipline your desires. Desire are part of being human. God put them in you, but they are destructive when they are unleashed.
2. Use your body to do things that will outlast it. This life is heaven practice.
3. Study the ways your body was designed for worship. Your voice was made for praise, your hands for service and your eyes for beholding wondrous things from God's law.
4. See yourself as a renter. You are not your own.
5. Practice sexual purity inside your marriage. This is not an option. Talk about it. Read books together about it. Teach your kids about it. Get good at it.

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