

The Gospel & Sexuality

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

The sexual revolution of our day has nothing on Corinth. Prostitution and pederasty were accepted behavior, and so Paul has to disciple the Corinthians. He doesn't send a never-ending scroll of rules, but teaches them how to think. This contrasts with religious approaches that won't talk about it, and worldly approaches that embrace lust as a way of life. God wants us to understand our sexuality in light of how He made us and saved us.

God & the Body

Paul spent 18 months preaching in Corinth and pastoring the church. He talked to Jews and Greeks, teaching them about Jesus' death and resurrection and all the freedom that comes with believing the gospel (Acts 18:4, 11). They had a saying that may have been his or resulted from his teaching, which he repeats twice and responds to in this passage: "All things are lawful for me" (v12). Since the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, everything has a proper use (Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:26). This means that every sin is a twisting, a perversion of something that was created for our good and enjoyment to God's glory (1 Tim. 4:4). All things are lawful, but all things can be misused. Just because it's lawful does not mean it's helpful (v12). It's not a sin in itself to stay up to 2am five nights a week watching Netflix, but is it helpful? It's not a sin to drink alcohol, but is it helpful? Paul wants us to ask: "Is this helpful to me, my family, my church, my community, my calling?" In order to answer this question rightly, you have to have a biblical view of God's glory, joy, creativity, and personality. He gives us Sabbath, jokes, snow covered peaks, ocean depths full of beauty and horrors, 10,000 new taste buds every two weeks, and particular people to love and die for. *Helpful* has a big range. Second, all things are lawful, but we're not to be brought under the power of any (v12). The Bible doesn't prohibit nicotine or caffeine, but it prohibits slavery, what we call addiction. Spurgeon said he didn't smoke cigars in excess, more than one at a time! If we rely on a stimulant to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, something is wrong. Man is not to live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3). The Corinthians thought bodily appetites are like itches that simply need to be scratched; food for the stomach and vice versa, and both will rot in the ground (v13). But they will also both be resurrected like Jesus was (vv13-14). The radical biblical doctrine of bodily resurrection connects our physical life now to our eternal physical life in immortal, glorified bodies. Our bodies were meant—designed, crafted, inspired—for God, not for sexual immorality, and God upholds, sustains, blesses and nurtures our bodies. He is the sustenance of our bodily life (v14).

Sexuality & Spirituality

Once we have a theology of the body, then we can think about sex. The connection between Christians and Jesus is so deep that our bodies are members of Him (v15). We go where He goes and enjoy His blessings (Eph. 2:6). And He goes with us, even

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into a sexually immoral relationship (vv15-16). Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 referring to the union of Adam and Eve, “the two shall become one flesh” (v16), to indicate what happens when a man and a prostitute have sex. There’s no personal, emotional, and spiritual covenant to bless and protect the sexual union, and so it violates Christ and a spouse. There’s no way to do this “on the side” and not impact everyone. A covenant is objectively broken even if only God knows about it. Paul asks, “Don’t you know this?” (v16), and we need a solid understanding in order to answer. A Christian is joined—glued—to the Lord and of one spirit with Him, and therefore will have to be faithful to Him in singleness and in the wonderful covenant of marriage (v17). Finally, Paul tells them what to do: “Flee fornication” (v18). This reminds us of Joseph who wasn’t worried about his coat, job, or personal safety when running from Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:12). You don’t wait to get out of a burning building. Jesus says to cut off your right hand if it causes you to sin, so you might need to get rid of your computer or smart phone, change jobs, get new friends, cancel TV, whatever it takes to *flee*, all the while knowing that the problem (and solution) begins in your heart. Evangelicals often refer to the body as a temple as a reason to eat right, exercise, and so on. But Paul says every other sin is done outside the body except for sexual immorality (v19). This is the sin that defiles the temple, a temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Again he wants Christians to answer that they understand (v19). Sexual immorality, because it’s so intimate and devastating, often leaves us in despair. But Paul reminds us we were bought with a price. What was the price? How much did we cost? Who was willing to pay it? God gave the most valuable thing in the entire universe, the precious blood of Christ, to cleanse us and make us whole. Why? So that we would glorify Him in our body and our spirit (v20). The sin of every person who asks God for forgiveness, trusting in Christ, is under the blood, and we are free.