

# **Your Body Matters to God**

**Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

**Introduction:** What's the big deal? The world often wonders why Christians care so much about sexual immorality. I mean, what's the big deal? Why does God care who I sleep with? Even professing Christians sometimes wonder why God cares so much about sex. Maybe you wonder the same thing this morning. What's the big deal?

It's interesting to me that the same people who wonder why God cares so much about sex take little time to consider why the world cares so much about sex. You don't have to look very far to see that talk of sex is pervasive in the culture in which we live. Just turn on the television. Open up social media or an internet browser. Listen to the most popular music of our day. Everywhere we go. Everywhere we turn. There is talk about sex.

Now, the mindset of the culture around us goes something like this: It's my body; I can do what I want with it. If it feels good, do it. As long as you're not hurting someone else, it's okay.

I think we know that's the opposite of what God says in His Word. God created sex. He made us male and female and designed sex for our good. For the good of reproduction. For the good of oneness. And for the good of pleasure. That's why God has given us His law. For our good. So that we can live according to His design.

My goal this morning is to answer the question for us of why sexual immorality is such a big deal to God and why it should be a big deal to us. The Apostle Paul is really helpful to us in answering this question in our text for this morning's sermon.

Go ahead and turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 6. It starts on page 897 in then black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, I encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave. We looked at verses 9-11 last week. We're going to look at verses 12-20 this morning. To bring it all together, I'm going to start reading in verse 9, and I'll read through verse 20.

(Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20...Pray)

Paul's argument in our text this morning is that your body matters to God, therefore, you must flee sexual immorality.

But why does your body matter to God? Paul gives four reasons. First, your body matters to God because...

## **I. You will be resurrected (1 Corinthians 6:14).**

### **A. Now, before getting there, Paul lays some groundwork in verses 12-13. (Read vs. 12-13)**

- 1. If you're using the ESV as I am, or some other translations, you'll notice that there are three statements in quotation marks in these verses.**
  - a. "All things are lawful for me," "All things are lawful for me," and "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food."**
  - b. There are some interpretive questions here. Because quotation marks were not used in biblical Greek, we don't know for sure where the quotations end, especially the one in verse 13. Different English translations end the quotation in different places.**
  - c. The other issue is that some scholars say that Paul is quoting and correcting Corinthian sayings that were popular in the wider culture, while others say he is correcting the Corinthian Christians' misunderstanding of his prior teaching.**
- 2. Wherever we end the quotations and whoever Paul is quoting, his point in verses 12-13 seems pretty clear.**
  - a. Just because you CAN do something doesn't mean that you SHOULD do it and that it is RIGHT to do it.**
  - b. Jesus is Lord. We belong to Him. We are to follow His design for sex.**

- c. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
- d. I like the way the NLT states it, “You can’t say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.”

Which brings us back to the first reason God cares about your body...

## **B. You will be resurrected.**

1. Paul writes... (Read vs. 14)
2. We know that part of the Corinthian error was to deny the resurrection of the dead. That’s what chapter 15 is all about. Paul addresses that error head on.
  - a. The Corinthians thought that since their bodies would just one day cease to exist, it didn’t matter what they did with them.
  - b. Paul told them that the whole Christian faith falls apart without the resurrection of the dead.
3. There was a kind of dualism present in Corinth which denied the importance of the physical. Many apparently believed that God is only concerned with the spiritual, therefore, we can do whatever we want with our physical bodies.
4. But Paul says that what you do with your body matters because Jesus is alive, and we too, those of us who are in Christ, will one day be raised to live forever with God.
  - a. This of course flies in the face of the understanding of eternity that many professing Christians have. When someone dies, they say things like “so-and-so got their wings.” Goshen, the Bible nowhere says that we become angels when we die. We will not be spirits floating around on clouds playing harps either.

- b. We will live forever with God as physical glorified beings in a physical new heaven and new earth. Just as Jesus was raised from the grave bodily, we who are in Christ will also be raised bodily. That is the clear teaching of Scripture.
- c. I want you to see this morning that the Christian worldview impacts everything about our lives. What you do with your body now matters because of eternity. I want you to understand that the Christian life is not just a bunch of dos and don’ts without any overarching purpose behind them. Our hope of future resurrection should inform every decision we make regarding what we do with and how we treat our bodies.
- d. Paul is applying that to sexual immorality here, but we could also apply this principle to gluttony, substance abuse, or a whole host of other sins.
- e. God physically raised Jesus from the grave. He will physically raise you from the grave as well, Christian. Glorify God with your body.

God cares about your body because you will be resurrected. The second reason God cares about your body is that...

## **II. You are united to Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15-17).**

- ### **A. Paul asks, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” (vs. 15a).**
1. This is exactly what Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 12:27 in the context of his teaching on spiritual gifts. He writes, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27).
  2. Here Paul applies the truth that we are members of Christ to the subject of sexual morality.
    - a. Look at verse 15. (Read vs. 15)
    - b. Paul says that when you, who are a member of Christ, unite with someone sexually, you are in some sense uniting Christ with that person.

- c. Now, let's be clear about what Paul is not saying. He is not saying that Jesus is in anyway tainted with sin.
- d. Rather, he is saying that the relationship between believers and Christ is remarkably intimate. As members of Christ, we represent Christ in what we do with our bodies. Thus, when we sin sexually by engaging in sexual immorality, the name of Christ is disgraced.
- e. One commentator writes, "Since we are one with Christ, and the sex sinner is one with his partner, Christ is placed in an unthinkable position in Paul's reasoning. Christ is not personally tainted with the sin, any more than the sunbeam that shines on a garbage dump is polluted. But His reputation is dirtied because of the association" (MacArthur, 151).

**B. Paul continues to explain the seriousness of sexual sin in verse 16 by pointing out that sexual union creates an enduring bond (vs. 16). (Read vs. 16)**

- 1. Many in ancient Corinth believed that sex was no big deal. There's a well-known quote from the time from a man named Athenaeus who said, "We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for daily concubinage, but wives in order to produce children legitimately" (Deiph. 13.573B in Schreiner, 128 and Garland, 240).
- 2. You can see the perversion of the culture in which the church at Corinth lived and ministered. It was much like our own culture. Though I think most in our culture would take issue with Athenaeus' statement.
- 3. But it's that kind of mindset that Paul is responding to when he says... (Read vs. 16).
- 4. You'll notice that Paul points the Corinthian believers to Genesis 2:24 which states, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

- a. This verse in the very beginning of the Bible is really the foundation for the Bible's teaching on sexual morality.
  - b. God created man and woman. He designed their bodies in sexually complementary ways. He united them together in marriage. And He gave them the gift of sex to be enjoyed according to His design.
  - c. Now, the one flesh union between husband and wife of Genesis 2:24 is about more than just sex, but it is not less than that.
- 5. In quoting Genesis 2:24, Paul's intent is to debunk one of the lies of the culture. It was a lie of the culture in Corinth 2,000 years ago. And it's a lie of our culture today. Paul makes clear that there is no such thing as casual sex.
  - 6. A person might be able to numb their conscience by giving themselves sexually to so many people that it feels less significant.
  - 7. But the truth is that the sexual relationship creates an enduring connection that the Bible describes as "one flesh." God designed sex that way.
  - 8. The world says that what we do with our bodies has no enduring effect upon who we are. But this kind of thinking flies in the face of biblical wisdom.
  - 9. C.S. Lewis, in his *Screwtape Letters* "says that each time a man and a woman enter into a sexual relationship a spiritual bond is established between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured" (MacArthur, 151 from Lewis, 96).
  - 10. "God takes sexual sin seriously because it corrupts and shatters spiritual relationships, both human and divine" (MacArthur, 151).
  - 11. Goshen, this is why fornication and adultery are such a big deal. This is why pornography is such a big deal. This is why divorce is such a big deal. This is why homosexuality is such a big deal.

12. The sexual union was created by God to be enjoyed between one man and one woman as long as they both shall live. That's why brokenness results when we step outside of God's good design.
13. Maybe you've experienced that brokenness in your life due to your sin. Maybe you've seen it in the lives of those you love. The good news is that there is mercy and grace and forgiveness and newness of life in Jesus.

C. In verse 17, Paul states that the believer's union with the Lord is of an even deeper level than the union created by a merely human sexual relationship.

1. He writes... (Read vs. 17)
2. His point is that, as a believer, your union with the Lord should prevent you from sinful sexual unions.
3. Do you see how this motivation for sexual purity is different from what is sometimes communicated by well-meaning Christians? It's certainly different from what the world thinks is the Christian's motivation for sexual purity.
4. Sexual purity is not about following all the rules. It's not about denying ourselves pleasure. It's about our union with Christ.

Your body matters to God because you will be resurrected and you are united to Christ. #3, your body matters to God because...

### III. You are indwelt by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:18-19a).

A. Paul says in verse 18 to "Flee from sexual immorality" (vs. 18a).

1. In light of all we have seen so far regarding the Bible's teaching on sexuality, what should be our response to sexual immorality? Flee!
  - a. The verb form of the word translated "flee" is what we call a present imperative.

- b. The fact that it is an imperative means that it has the force of a command. Paul isn't giving you a choice. He's giving you a command. On the authority of God and His Word, FLEE!
- c. The present tense carries with it the idea of continually fleeing. We might translate this as "Keep on fleeing!" Throughout our lives, we must flee from temptation. We must continually flee sexual immorality.
- d. There will never come a time when you are okay to let down your guard. Flee sexual immorality.

2. This is the same counsel that Solomon gave to his son in the book of Proverbs concerning sexual immorality. He told his son, "Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house" (Prov. 5:8).
3. I want to urge you this morning, Christian, flee from sexual immorality. If you are asking the question, "How far is too far?" you are asking the wrong question. Flee from sexual immorality! You should be asking yourself, "What do I need to do to ensure that I do not give in to temptation? What does it look like for me to flee sexual immorality?"
4. Do not play around with sexual sin. It will bite you like a venomous snake. Jesus said, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off." Do whatever you have to do to flee from sexual immorality. Jesus said, "It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." We saw last week that the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God."

B. That's the first part of verse 18. Flee sexual immorality. Now look at the rest of the verse (vs. 18b). (Read vs. 18)

1. What does Paul mean that the sexually immoral person sins against his own body?
2. The ESV, NASB, and NIV add the word "other," suggesting that Paul is developing a contrast between sexual sin and every other sin.

3. This does not mean that there are no other ways to sin against your body besides sexual immorality.
4. Rather, sexual immorality is unique in its character because of the one flesh union it creates.
5. Stephen Um writes, “[Paul is] saying there’s nothing else that involves us—all of us, including out bodies, everything we are—quite like sex does. With sex, we’re all in; with sex, we give ourselves—all of ourselves—away” (Um, 118).
6. Another commentator writes, “[Sexual immorality] is the most unique [sin] in its character. It rises from within the body bent on personal gratification. It drives like no other impulse and when fulfilled affects the body like no other sin. It has a way of internally destroying a person that no other sin has. Because sexual intimacy is the deepest uniting of two persons, its misuse corrupts on the deepest human level” (MacArthur, 151).

C. Paul says that this matters because your body, believer, is a temple of the Holy Spirit (vs. 19a). (Read vs. 19a)

1. Paul refers to the church as God’s temple in 1 Corinthians 3:16.
2. Now, he refers to the bodies of individual believers as temples of the Holy Spirit.
3. And this is of course consistent with what we know of the doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit. When you come to faith in Christ, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. God, through His Spirit, takes up residence inside of you.
4. Tom Schreiner writes, “In the Old Testament, the temple was in Jerusalem, signifying the place where the Lord specially dwelt with his people. The holiness of the temple was signified by the many compartments one had to pass through before entering the Most Holy Place. Indeed, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place where the Lord dwelt, and such entrance was limited to one day a year, the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Special care had to be taken not to defile or

stain that which was holy. Now God’s holy presence is no longer limited to the temple, for he indwells the church of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:16) and even the bodies of individual believers. Since every place where God dwells is holy, believers must be careful not to defile God’s temple—that is, their bodies—with sexual sin” (Schreiner, 129).

5. Stephen Um adds, “What Paul is saying is absolutely revolutionary! Absolutely radical! Our bodies are the place where God has chosen to live and the very thing he has chosen to make a part of himself! He’s bound himself so tightly to us, even our bodies, because he wants to be with us—for us to be his and for him to be ours—forever! No other religion would ever dare say anything even remotely close to that. Gods live in temples, not in human bodies. Gods keep their distance; they don’t wrap themselves up with people, especially not their bodies. But this One does! Our bodies have tremendous value, and they cannot be treated casually because they matter eternally!”

Your body matters to God because you will be resurrected, you are united to Christ, and you are indwelt by the Spirit. Finally, your body matters to God because...

#### IV. You were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20).

A. The lie of the culture is that it is your body.

1. You’ve heard the slogan “My body; my choice” regarding abortion.
2. This is the kind of thinking that pervades our culture on a whole host of issues related to sexual morality.

B. But Paul refutes this lie with one short statement at the end of verse 19 – “You are not your own” (vs. 19b).

1. God created your body. The Bible says that God knit you together in your mother’s womb (Ps. 139:13).

**2. And God sustains your body. You have breath in your lungs this morning because of God. He is your sustainer.**

**C. And He is your redeemer. God redeemed your body with the precious blood of His Son Jesus Christ (vs. 20). (Read vs. 20)**

- 1. You were far from God because of your sin. But Jesus stepped in and gave His life so that you could be reconciled to God.**
- 2. He redeemed you. He bought you out of the slave market of sin and reunited you with God your Creator.**
- 3. And He did so at great cost to Himself. He gave His life. He shed His blood. For you.**
- 4. You are not your own. You belong to God.**
- 5. So, glorify God in your body.**

**Conclusion:** I wonder if you see that Paul's motive for sexual purity is very different from what we often think.

I think that as God's people, we sometimes get caught back on our heels when it comes to sexual morality. The culture is on the offensive regarding sex, and we often don't know how to respond.

The culture says that our beliefs regarding sex are outdated. The culture says that our beliefs concerning sex are oppressive. The culture says that our beliefs concerning sex are bigoted.

And I think that too many Christians aren't completely sure the culture is wrong about that.

And sometimes I think that's because we as the church haven't done a good job of teaching God's people about sex in the context of God's story and His work in the world. We give people a list of dos and don'ts without explaining God's design.

I love what Andrew Wilson says on this point in his commentary on 1 Corinthians. He writes:

“At a theological level, Paul gives us some priceless teaching that explains not only how sex should and should not be used, but why. And his reasons are not the ones that Christian young people are often given today. They are not trivial or self-interest (“If you wait until marriage, then your sex life will be better,” for instance, or “You’re less likely to catch a sexually transmitted infection that way”). Rather, they are unashamedly theological.

All of his reasons are connected to the big picture—to the central themes of Christian teaching. Paul connects sex to our doctrine of the church...He connects it to our understanding of salvation...He links it to our anthropology...He connects it to eschatology. Paul is continually drawing us back to the theological reasons for Christian sexual ethics, rather than simply giving the Corinthians a list of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts.’ That helps us understand the restrictions God places on sex, and makes those restrictions a lot more compelling.”

Here's the bottom line, Goshen. Sex was God's idea not ours. He made it. And He made it to be enjoyed according to His design. In the context of lifelong marriage between one man and one woman.

Maybe you've stepped outside of that design. Maybe you've even experienced the brokenness that comes from stepping outside of God's design. I want you to know that there is mercy and grace for you in Jesus.

The Bible says that if you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive you your sin and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

If you're not yet a Christian, you can repent of your sin and place your faith in Jesus today. He will save you. He will cleanse you. He will bring you into right relationship with your Creator.

Maybe you're already a Christian, but you've messed up. The grace of God in Christ is for you too. If you will turn from your sin and turn to Jesus.