

Small Group Leader Take-Aways

The Corinthians conception of “wisdom” placed great emphasis on personal freedom; sound familiar? Instead of their phrase being “You do you” or “YOLO” (You only live once) it was “I am free to do anything.” Interestingly, the inspiration for this idea, “I am free to do anything,” may have come from Paul himself for he preached a gospel that declared the Jews were free from the law and unconditional grace; therefore, why couldn’t they “do whatever they wanted?” They got part of the idea correct- In Christ, they were free. Yet, in their freedom they were putting themselves back into bondage.

We see here that prostitution (legal and acceptable in this culture, including sexual relations of males with boys and harlots) was one of those “freedom” acts being tolerated in the Corinthian church. Paul uses rebuttals to the Corinthian arguments¹:

Corinthians	Paul
All things are lawful for me	But not all things are beneficial
All things are lawful for me	But I will not be dominated by anything
Food is meant for the stomach [The Corinthians are using this argument to refer to the bodily need for sex]	The body is meant (not for fornication) but for the Lord
And the stomach for food	And the Lord for the body
And God will destroy	And God raised
Both one and the other	The Lord and will also raise us by his power ⁱ

Let’s focus on the third argument (“food is meant for the stomach”). Paul wants to address their argument for fornication. Paul clearly articulates that the body belongs to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ promises to raise them up just like he was raised up. The way we treat our bodies today, in 2018, is important! Contrary to popular belief, our bodies are not just husks that we will shed but are instead integral elements to the process of redemption when Christ returns. Therefore, when a man has sexual intercourse with a prostitute (or anyone else he is not married to) he is not only committing an act of infidelity to Christ but he is actually taking something that belongs to Christ (his own body) and bringing it into the realm of the unholy.

How can Paul make this bold statement? Because his assumption presupposes that sexual intercourse is not merely a momentary act that satisfies an “itch” or “need” but instead is an act that creates a mysterious but real and enduring union between a man and woman (hence the reason Paul cites Gen. 2:24).

In regards to our bodies being the temple, we must remember that the temple was the holy of holies. If our bodies are now the temple (and our churches create a community when we are together) we must keep our bodies holy vessels fit for the Spirit, not so that the Holy Spirit will dwell in us, but *because* the Spirit already dwells in us.

What do we do with the men who have been “sleeping around?” We don’t throw them out of the church. Instead we call them to cease their behavior and “be who they already are.”

¹ Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997. 102.

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon.
2. Paul quotes the Corinthians, saying "All things are lawful," but then comments that "not all things are helpful" (1 Cor. 6:12). What does this mean broadly? Now, what does this mean in the context of sexual purity?

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

After explaining how Christians should settle legal disputes, Paul details a list of behaviors that belonged to the community's old self. Yet now, they are washed, sanctified, and justified in Christ by the Spirit, which scholars believe is a baptismal formula. *Remember your baptism in the Spirit.*

Some helpful context: The Corinthian church was living into a duality that downplayed decisions that affected bodily acts. The prevailing belief was that the physical body would pass and only the spirit would remain, therefore, you could indulge in whatever you wanted because the physical body would be shed.

READ 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

ANALYZE THE TEXT

1. Where does Paul quote the Corinthians and how does he refute commonly quoted sayings (v.12 and 13)?
2. Explain Paul's analogy in verse 19 based on Temple worship described in the Old Testament?
3. What makes sexual immorality particularly destructive in the Christian life?
4. How does our understanding of God's covenants and marriage covenants inform our understanding of Paul's commentary in vs. 15-17?

5. What does this tell me about God?
6. What does this tell me about myself?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Paul introduces why we cannot be dominated by anything, particularly sexual sin. Paul's argument centers on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit within us, marked in baptism as a claimed people under God's power. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to flee sexual immorality in order to live into their new union with God in the Spirit (vs. 17). It's important to note that we flee sexual immorality, not *in order* to make a nice home for the Spirit, but *because* we are already claimed by God in the Spirit.

In summary, sexual immorality is a sin against our own bodies (personally), our communities (those fellow stones of the Temple), and our Triune God. How do we flee? Live into our baptismal identity and refuse dominance by anything but Christ, for we were bought at a price.

APPLY (Break up into men and women for the application)

1. What does "flee from sexual immorality" look like today in our over-sexualized dating culture, entertainment, and fashion industries?
2. Sexual sin is not something that you all-the-sudden fall into. What are the small decisions we make on a daily basis to guard our hearts from sexual impurity?
3. What is your role in helping the community guard against sexual immorality?

MEMORIZE 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

CHALLENGE

If you have committed acts of sexual immorality, or are caught in patterns of sexual sin, Jesus offers hope and healing through confession (1 Jn 1:9, James 5:16). Let us confess, unashamed in Christ.
