

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: 1 Corinthians

The Sexual Conduct of the Believer

1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:12-20

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 10.16-17.10

This morning we're going to be studying from 1 Corinthians, chapters 5 and 6. Pastor Tim is actually going to spend most of his time concentrating on chapter 6 today. I'd like to read from 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 12 through 20 this morning. If you have your bible with you please follow along. If you don't have a bible you should be able to find one in a chair back in front of you. I believe the page numbers will be on the side screens for you to follow along.

1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 12 through 20: All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food – and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never. Or do you not know that the who is joined to a prostitute becomes on body with her? For, as it is written, the two will become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Now, I want you to take your bibles and turn back one chapter to chapter 5. That's where we're going to begin this morning. Let me just remind you of just a few things that you probably know about Corinthians but perhaps have forgotten. Why was the book written in the first place? If you remember we talked about this the early stages of developing our understanding of 1 Corinthians. It was a response. The Corinthians had question. There were problems within their church and so they write their pastor, their founding pastor – the Apostle Paul and asked him what should we do with these things? So, what we have here is his response back to them, answering their question.

The first four chapters was the first issue and we dealt with that for some length of time. It was the issue of division within the church. That has ended. Once we rounded the corner into chapter 5 we start a brand new series of questions that the Corinthians were asking Paul. And the second issue has to do specifically with sexual immorality in the church. Now, remember, Corinth is a place that was a sexually charged atmosphere; a sexually charged culture. This was a place that was synonymous with the idea of sex. In fact, the word Corinthinize was used all throughout Asia Minor which meant to have sex with a prostitute. Why was that? It was because the Temple of Aphrodite was right there in the center of Corinth. The Temple of Aphrodite was this huge temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – a huge temple that housed thousands upon thousands of temple prostitutes. People from all over the Roman culture would come to Corinth and there they would practice different ritual sex acts

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as a form of worship. And what happened is that Corinth basically took on this labyrinth nature of hybrid sexuality. Anything was permissible in Corinth.

The issue that was going on in the church was that the sexual culture was sliding into the culture of the church and we see that most specifically in chapter 5. All of chapter 5 deals with the immorality problem isolated in one man. Look at what Paul says in the very first verse. He says, it's actually reported, in other words – he received information from those letters of question that he had from the church. It's actually reported that there was sexual immorality among you. Among you means the church; not the culture; not the outside but those who claim the name of Christ. He says it's actually been reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of the kind that's not tolerated even among pagans for a man has his father's wife. A son of a father was sleeping with his step-mother. That was not the issue for Paul. Verse 2. And you are arrogant. Ought you not rather to mourn? In other words, he was saying and you, the church are tolerating it. He says, let him who's done this be removed from among you.

And then, from verses 3 all the way down through verse 13, the end of the chapter deals primarily with the discipline procedure of this person who was acting immorally. Now, we're not going to spend much time of those verses because we already have done that. About a month ago we were working through chapter 3. We were coming to an understanding how to solve conflicts in our own lives and we spent time working through the aspects of church discipline. We worked through Matthew 18 and then we used 1 Corinthians chapter 5. We worked through and so we have an understanding as a congregation what it means when a church has to get involved to discipline one of its members. So, I'm not going to spend any time on this, rather, I'm going to move us over to chapter 6 where Paul takes a much broader look at sexual behaviors and sexual practices. So, we're going to look at the passage that was read for us. If you want to catch up, say I wasn't there. I don't know what chapter 5 says. You can stop out at the Resource Center and pick up one of the teachings.

But for now I want to deal, today with the larger behavioral practices when it comes to our understanding of sex. We live in a sexually charged society, not that much unlike the Corinthians society. We have a very permissive society today and we need to be asking as believers: how should we respond; how should we act; how should we think when it comes to sexuality. We, being sexual beings – how should we respond to our culture's invitation to promiscuity.

Now, I want to let you know that we're going to look at the negative outcomes of following the cultural norm. That's going to be the track that we follow this morning. We're going to look at three things that sexual immorality does to our body and to our spiritual lives. That's essentially what Paul does in verses 12 through the end of the chapter in verse 20 in chapter 6. He gives us three things that sexual immorality does to the body and to the spiritual life if

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we choose to follow what culture presents as a norm. So let's look at the first in verses 12 through 13.

The first thing that Paul teaches us is that sexual sin destroys. It has a destructive nature. Now, follow me in verses 12 and 13 carefully. Notice the quote marks. "All things are lawful for me." See that? Not all things are helpful. Then he starts again. "All things are lawful for me." He says the same thing again. But I'll not be enslaved by anything. Now, notice again, verse 13. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for the food" - and God will destroy both one and the other. Stop right there. What do these quote marks represent? Why are they there? These are the type of clues you need to look for as your studying through scripture. You ought to be asking yourself, well, what does this mean? These quote marks have been put there by the translators to help us identify a saying that was going on, that was popularized within the Corinthian culture. So, these quote marks illustrate slogans. It's as if the Corinthians were saying, you know, all things are ok for me; all things are lawful. It's just physical. Food is food; sex is sex. It's just biology. See, this is where you have to understand the context, the culture to understand scripture.

Now, think about that in our own setting. Think about the sayings and the slogans that have been popularized over the last thirty-forty years that you and I have a basic understanding of. But if you were to pluck this out of our culture and move it ahead two-thousand years without any kind of context people would be scratching their heads saying what does that mean?

For example, those of you who were born and went through the sixties imagine just plucking out of the sixties the phrase flower power or peace and projecting that forward into a culture that doesn't have any understanding of the context. They'd be saying what? A flower doesn't have any power. What does that mean? We understand what that means, right? That was a protest against the Viet Nam war. Make love not war. There were all kinds of slogans that were going on there. So, we get the context. We get what that means. Or what about this one. Look at the side screens. Remember this one? I mean, what does that mean? Sit on it? I mean we understood that it was a slang use. We got the sense of that but it would make no sense without its cultural context. Or, think about this next one. You're probably very familiar with this one, right? Now, we know that this was the mega war between the food chains - Wendy's and McDonalds - where's the beef? That would make no sense without a cultural context. That's the exact same thing that is going on here. You have to understand the cultural context.

And the context here is that the Corinthians and really, the whole Roman Empire at this point had the basic philosophy about the body. That when the body had a need, had a feeling for something that it should be met. When the body feels a need for sex you should have sex. It was just biological. When the body has a need for food you should have food. It's just natural process. Paul takes this very popular concept within the culture and he turns it on the

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Corinthians. And he really does a play on words. He uses two words. The word lawful and then down here he uses the word helpful.

Let's look at both of these. First, the word lawful, ἔξεστι, *éxesti*. It means permissible. He's saying, in a sense, he's repeating the cultural phrase. All things are lawful for me. But he's not saying all things all things are lawful for me as a believer. He's not moving this forward, this philosophy forward. He's repeating so that they understand where his mind is. He understands where their mind is. He's saying this is what culture is saying to us. All things are lawful. Now, he could say, by the way, he could say, yes, as a believer all things are lawful for me. If I would choose a route that was clearly unrighteous those actions are not going to necessarily spiral me into hell. If I'm truly redeemed I'm not now going to feel a sense of danger. I have freedom. I have a sense of grace. I live in the midst of grace. I live in the midst of forgiveness. He also warns us in Galatians 5, you're called to freedom but do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. That's really not what he's saying. He's not saying we're free. We can do whatever we want. Notice he brackets this slogan in a statement. He says, all things are lawful for me but, that's the transition, not all things are helpful.

This word helpful, συμφέρω *sumphérō*, means profitable and the idea behind this is that it's not beneficial for me in any way. Really, no sin is profitable; no sin is beneficial. Actually, all sin ultimately brings some kind of price. There's a price that Christ paid on our behalf. There's a price many times we have to pay because of something that we have done. We might be forgiven but it's not going to be helpful. And sexual sin, especially can be destructive.

We know that. I don't have to give you many illustrations. It imprisons, it addicts, it destroys relationships, it shatters marriage, it devastates homes. I mean, it ruins people on all types of levels. It is very destructive. It is not helpful. Paul says, you might be saying in your culture all things are lawful but this is not beneficial. This is not profitable for you. In fact, scriptures are filled with admonishment that we ought to run from sexual immorality because it is destructive.

I'd like to take you to many passages but let me just take you to one book – the book of Proverbs and let me take you through a couple of Proverbs to illustrate my point. Follow me over to the book of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 5. Now, the book of Proverbs was written as if a father was writing to his son. And so, it's a great book, by the way parents for you to use to just set down and work it through with your sons, your daughters. It's a book filled with wisdom but the sense of it is a father is talking to his son. These are things a father wants his son to know and he talks specifically about the idea of sexual immorality. He talks about adultery.

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Verse 3, that's where we're going to pick up in chapter 5. He says, son I want you to hear this. The lips of a forbidden woman drip honey and her speech is smoother than oil. Now you have to remember this is poetry so you have to work through what does the author mean in this poetic saying? Well, what does he say? This forbidden woman. This woman, who by the way is not your wife drips honey. Here speech is smoother than oil. What is he saying? She's filled with desire. But, transition in the end, she's as bitter as wormwood which was a type of poison. She might have a sense of desire and allurement but you have to remember that it's poison; sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet, verse 5 go down to death. Her steps follow the paths of Sheol. She does not ponder the path of life. In other words, she's just wandering through life. She has no purpose of life. Her ways wander, and she does not know it. Now listen to me son, listen. Do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way from her. Keep as far away as possible is what he's saying. Do not go near the door of her house.

Now, he gives us five results if we choose to follow after her. So, follow me carefully. Five results. First, verse 9 – lest you give your honor to others, our years to the merciless lest strangers take their fill of your strength and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, at the end of you're your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, how I hate discipline, and my heart despised reproof.

Ok, five results. First result. You give your honor away. Isn't that true? How many times do you know of someone in the community, a good name in the community, does something foolish; runs away with somebody; destroys their home. They trash their name. They have no honor left. That's a result.

Second thing. Your years are merciless. You lived a life of mercy. Now it's merciless, difficult living.

Third, your strength is evaporated. I've seen that as well. People who's homes are divided. You can see it on their face. I had a really good friend. In fact, he was probably one of my best friends here in town. I left, went away to seminary. Came back, picked up our friendship. He was involved in the church. His wife, behind his back was involved in an affair and I watched. He was a robust, big man. He lost all kinds of weight; health started to fail. A couple years later I saw her. She looked terrible. You could see it on her face. Her strength was gone. This had taken a toll on her life. This one act destroyed two lives.

It goes on and says, not only that but you're labors go to the house of a foreigner. Isn't that true? How many times have we seen homes that are divided and people go into near bankruptcy? They loose everything that they've built. They're splitting things left and right and now they have nothing. It all goes to the lawyers; all goes to the fees; all goes – it all goes. And this is what happens.

He says, ultimately, in the end you're whole life is consumed. These are the results.

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Now, lest you think God is opposed to us having a sexual life just drop down to verse 18. He says to his son let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. In other words, it's fine. Enjoy yourself in the proper context. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight. Be intoxicated always in her love. This is the place where you ought to enjoy yourself. Here is the place that is proper.

Why should you intoxicate yourself, my son with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of adultery. He says, why would you do that? He says, by the way, verse 21, for a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord that he ponders all his paths. You'll never get away with it. What you're doing is always before the Lord's eyes.

Drop down to chapter 6, verse 23. He says again, for the commandment, which is this book, is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life. Why? To preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart. Do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread but a married woman hunts down a precious life. I love this imagery. Why would you just squander this loaf of bread when you have a woman at home who is working diligently to create a precious life? He says, do not stray for the fleeting pleasures of immorality.

Can a man, verse 27, carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? In other words, can you sin and get away with it? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.

Alright, one more, chapter 9, verse 17. And there is a sense of truth to this next statement but notice the end result. Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Don't let anyone tell you that there isn't a sense of pleasure to sin. All sin has a sense of pleasure but it leads to something. But he who does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol, If you do this you are walking into a life of death. It's destruction.

First thing – sexual sin destroys. That's the first thing that Paul is trying to communicate to the Corinthians.

Second thing he says – number two. Halfway through verse 12. He says sexual sin enslaves. Now, take a careful look at verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 6. He says, but I will not be enslaved by anything. The word enslaved essentially means to reign over. We've looked at this word before. It means to have ultimate control; to exercise power. That's sexual sin, isn't it? Sexual sin grips you and won't let go – it's a sense of enslavement.

I was reading in a national addiction report that says now more people in America are sexually addicted than those who are addicted to alcohol and drugs combined. Sexual

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addicts. Why is it so pervasive in our society? It's everywhere, right? You cannot open up a magazine without seeing some kind of alluring model that is advertising something that I have no idea the something that she's advertising because that's not what your mind goes to does it? Or you're watching television. There's so many commercials that I'm actually embarrassed to be a parent with my teenage children because there are all of these commercials. They're all geared towards sex. Not only that but their on our billboards; they're all over the internet. It's so accessible now. We have become a sex-crazed society and we can see it through the addictions that are mounting throughout our country and it is enslaving people.

Just quickly, you don't need to turn there but let me read to you 1 Thessalonians. This is Paul's words. He says, I want to remind you what the will of God is. He says, the will of God, 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 3. Listen. Do you want to know the will of God? The will of God for you is your sanctification; you're spiritual growth. God's will for you is that you should be growing spiritually – not going backwards in your spiritual life but going forward. That's the idea. He says this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you, and how would you do that: abstain from sexual immorality that each one of you, and here is the key word, control your own body. We're called how to learn to control our own body.

Remember last week when Wendell was speaking. He said one of the traits that was admirable about the Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:27? He understood how to control himself. And the idea of controlling is the idea that I will discipline, I will fight against the urges that take me away from the course or the direction I want to go. I'm not going to let myself be controlled. I will control, why? Because if we don't control us, our sin nature will. And that's what's clearly seen through sexual immorality. It becomes enslaving to us.

Then, last thing and I want to take a little bit of time with this is that sexual sin tends to distort. Verse 13. It distorts. What I mean by this is that it distorts God's purpose for your body. Do you understand this? Sexual immorality, sexual sin distorts God's divine purpose for your body. Look at halfway through verse 13. What does he say? He says the body is not meant for sexual immorality but for who? The Lord. Your body. Did you know this? Your body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body. To put this in context you have to remember the Corinthian distortion. The Corinthian distortion is that well, food is just food. Food is for the stomach, the stomach is for the food. The body is for sex, sex is for the body and it's all biological and he stops and he says no. The body, for a believer is not just biological. It's not just the movement of the natural function set into a natural world – no, it's not. He uses the word body. *Soma* is the word. He says the whole body, both the material and the immaterial – those inner parts of me. But the flesh, those things I can feel, that outward shape of your body plus the inward you is for God.

Because what happens? Think about it. What happens to your body after you die? I don't know. Put me in a box. Put me in the ground. I'm not that concerned about my body. You're

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right. We're not that concerned about our body. But what is to come of our body? We're going to be resurrected to our bodies. Did you realize that? That when you die you go immediately to be with the Lord. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. But there is a day when you'll be reunited with your body and some of you are thinking great, that's exactly what I want to hear. I thought I was going to get rid that thing. No. You're actually going to be reunited to your body. You are going to have a resurrected body. Say, where do you get that? Verse 14. Look at it, right here. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. The idea here is that God raised Jesus into a glorified body. He's going to raise you. Just because you die does not mean that your body does not have a sense of eternal relationship with God and this is what Paul's entire point is that sexual sin distorts God's intended purpose for your body.

How? What's the purpose? The purpose of your body is for the Lord. How does that work out? Two ways. Alright. Follow me. Two ways. We're going to see it in the text. First is relationally. The second is actually.

Let me explain that. First – relationally. Look at verse 15. You are going to be and you are now considered as a believer one with Christ. Verse 15. Do you not know, he uses that phrase over and over again, do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ, that your body is member of Christ. The idea behind this is that you are one with Christ. Do you understand that? When you begin a relationship with Christ you become one with Christ. Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Should I have an illicit sexual affair, should I use my body in such a way? He says never. Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute, now watch this – becomes one body with her? What does that sound like? It sounds like marriage, doesn't it? Because he says, for it is written the two will become one flesh. Notice the quotes. What's the quotes? Genesis 2:24. He's pointing back to a passage that deals specifically with marriage. That a man should leave his mother and father and he clings to his wife. And they are joined, they become one flesh. He says that's exactly what happens when you take your body in a context outside of which God has intended for and you join it in an immoral way to someone else. He says your body becomes one but he, verse 17, who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. In other words, make that your concentration.

Flee, verse 18, from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body but the sexually immoral person sins against his body. How? Well, it destroys his body. It enslaves his body. It distorts his body. That's what he's saying. He says, you are one with Christ. That's your relational make-up. You would not take Christ someplace like this. Don't take your body there because they're one. Relational.

Second is actual. Now listen. That's a technical term. If you're reading something and you read a biblical scholar, a theologian and uses the word actual they're meaning in the present reality. You're not only relationally one with Christ but in the present reality, look at verse

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19, you are what? A temple of the Holy Spirit. Do you see that? Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God? You are not your own for you were bought with a price. Do you hear that? You're a temple. You're a shrine. The Holy Spirit resides within you.

By the way – your body is not even your body. Do you understand that? You ransomed that to Christ when you received Him as a savior. You said I am coming all of me to you. I'm giving all of myself; my inside, my outside, all of my make up I'm giving that over to you. My body is not my body. Use it Lord as you would see fit. And He's done what? He's purchased it. 1 Peter. Not with the blood of bulls and goats but with the precious blood of who? Christ. He's purchased your body.

So what is the end result? What is Paul moving towards? He says this is what you do with it. This is what you do with your body. Here's what you do with your life. You glorify God in your body. That's where he's driving to. Corinthians, you want to know? Sexual sin will destroy, it will enslave, it will distort so glorify God in your bodies.

Now some of you might be here and you might be thinking I haven't always glorified God in my body. Will He forgive me? That's from believers – people who have claimed the name of Christ. Say I've not always glorified, not always done either in my mind or with my eyes or with my actions – I've not always glorified God in my body. Will He forgive me? The same question that King David asked after his illicit affair with Bathsheba. He said in Psalm 51:1 have mercy on me oh God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Will you forgive me? The answer is in Psalm 103:12 – as far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Does He forgive us? Yes, He does. It doesn't matter if it happened last year. It doesn't matter if it happened last week or last night. His grace, mercy, His forgiveness is real to you right now but Paul is saying from this point forward glorify God in your body. Stop playing those games of lust in your head. Glorify God in your body. Stop allowing your eyes diverted from what is real and true before you in your own home to some pornographic image that has captured your attention and stealing your hearts. Glorify God in your body.

If you're thinking of wandering away from the one that God has given you and you are in the midst of an illicit affair – stop. Glorify God in your body. If you're carrying the guilt of some broken relationship from the past that has ended in divorce know that it is gone, removed as far as from the east is from the west you've been forgiven but from this point forward glorify God in your body. That's what Paul is saying. Some of us might need to say I have to start living my commitment. And that's right. That's glorifying God in our bodies.

Maybe here this morning you might be saying I need to recommit to the facts of righteousness that I'm not living to, to maybe glorify God in my body. Pray with me.