

This Changes Everything

Week 3: From Commonplace to Sacred

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

As we get started this morning, I want to pull back the curtain on some of our processes and innerworkings when it comes to sermon series we do. Leading up to a new series, I fill out a questionnaire that our Communications team put together. It helps them understand where we're going in the series so they can create the graphics and bumpers that we use.

And so, I answer questions like, "In a single sentence, what are you trying to teach in this series?" "What inspired this series?" "What 'non-negotiables' do you have?" For our Christmas series I said one of my non-negotiables is that Quentin dress up as Buddy the Elf one morning. He didn't think I was serious, but...it'll come up in his next performance review!

One of the questions is, "What's the mood of this series?" That's a hard one, but especially for this one. You see, 1 Corinthians isn't a feel-good letter. Paul's addressing some serious issues going on in the church, so there's a confrontational tone throughout the entire letter. He's correcting some of their misguided beliefs and practices. Ideas from their culture that they have adopted into their faith.

And so, to preach the text accurately means that we may experience that same confrontation as Paul's words rub up against our own culture's beliefs and practices. Ideas from the world around us that we may have adopted into our faith, as well. And, I don't think this will be felt any more than in our text for today. A text that is just as confrontational today as it was to the original audience. It pushes against our cultural narrative just as much as it did theirs.

Today, we are studying one of the most beautiful passages in Scripture about our bodies. And, our text today helps shape how we ought to think about our bodies, particularly in regards to our sexuality. So, if you have a Bible, or a Bible app you like to use, turn with me to 1 Corinthians 6. And, while you turn, I'm going to pray!

Now, before we get to what Paul writes, I want to remind us why he's writing it. This letter was written to a fairly young church, maybe 5 or 6 years old, and most of the people he's writing to are new followers of Jesus. And, most of the issues Paul addresses come from these new believers continuing to live out the values and practices of their culture.

But, now they're a part of the Church, and God has set His Church apart to be a counter-cultural community. But, instead of living out who God has set them apart to be, the church in Corinth was culturally comfortable. They just kinda blended in with the culture around them. And one of the ways this played out was in their sexual practices. It mimicked that of everyone else around them.

You see, the norm in Corinth was sexual freedom and promiscuity. Prostitution was a regular part of their culture and even in their pagan religious practices. So, in Corinth, it wouldn't be out

of the ordinary for someone to leave work and stop at a brothel before heading home, or for sex to be a part of dinner parties. To them, it was just sex. It wasn't a big deal. Sex was just meeting a physical need or satisfying the body's appetite.

And, apparently, some of the Christians in Corinth were still practicing this sexual ethic. They were shrugging off sexual immorality as no big deal. It's just sex. It's just physical. And, that sounds a lot like how our culture views sex today, doesn't it? Our culture tends to view sex as primarily a physical thing, meaning, it's mostly about the body and satisfying its desires.

In Corinth, and today, sex is viewed as just a matter of the body. And so, you'd think that the Bible might go in the opposite direction. Maybe minimize the importance of the body in sex and just focus on the emotional and spiritual aspect of our sexuality. But, that's not what Paul does here. In fact, if anything, he goes out of his way to highlight the importance of our bodies and how meaningful they are.

So, in these verses, we will see Paul take something that we may see as commonplace, ordinary, and he shows us just how sacred they are. How God has given them more dignity and significance than we can even imagine. In our text, Paul lays out three reasons why our bodies matter, and the first one is because it matters to God. **Your body matters because it matters to God.**

Paul makes this argument by confronting some of the ideologies of their day. Beliefs that actually minimized the importance and value and dignity of the body and justified their sexual practices. Look at what he says in **verse 12...(READ)**

Paul has a little dialogue with these slogans of the day. And notice, he doesn't outright dismiss them. In fact, we'll see next week that Paul would probably affirm them to a certain degree. Instead, he gives them some nuance that was missing. He's saying, "Sure, you have the right and the freedom to do whatever you want, but that doesn't mean it's all beneficial or that it's healthy for you to be mastered by your desires." That's not freedom, it's just another form of slavery.

I think Paul would argue that our desires are a good thing, even our sexual desires. But, they shouldn't be a God-thing in our life. He takes on another cultural slogan in **verse 13a...(READ)**

Now, notice that this entire thing is in quotes. Paul's not saying this. He's saying this is what the Corinthians say to justify their actions. When they say food for the stomach and the stomach for food, they're saying, "the reason I have a stomach is so I can eat and the reason there's food is so I can satisfy my stomach. So, if I'm hungry, I should eat!"

They were taking that slogan and applying it to their sexuality. If you have an appetite or a desire for something, you should fulfill it. Sex is for the body and the body is for sex, they said. And since God's going to destroy the body anyway, we should get as much pleasure and

enjoyment out of it as we possibly can. Besides, it's just physical. My body has nothing to do with my relationship with God. That's spiritual. To which Paul says...(READ vs. 13b)

In other words, your body is not given to you to do whatever you want with it. Your body was given to you by AND for the Lord. Your body matters because it matters to God. He treasures it and has set it apart to be holy and used for His glory. And, as people called to be his own, we ought to treat our body with the same value and dignity and worth that God gives to it. And, Paul points to the resurrection to show just how much value God has given our physical body...(READ vs. 14)

The resurrection changes everything, including how we view our bodies. God raised Jesus from the dead in bodily form. It wasn't a spiritual resurrection, it was an actual, physical, bodily resurrection. And, one day, we will experience the same thing. God's eternal plan for you is not to be some disembodied spirit floating around on a cloud for all eternity. And, thank God, because that sounds awful! God's eternal plan for you includes your body!

Ray Ortlund said, "God's eternal plan for you is not less physical experience, but better physical experience." One day, our bodies will no longer be subject to weakness or pain or aging. No more sore knees or pain in our lower backs after jumping on a trampoline 3 years ago. Your soul will exist forever in a glorious, resurrected body.

And so, God's not trying to get rid of your body. One day, he will fully and completely redeem it, just like he will fully and completely redeem your soul. And since God sees our bodies as valuable enough to redeem them by the blood of Jesus, then we ought to treat them with that same value, too.

So, your body matters because it matters to God. But it also matters because it's a member of Christ. Not that we are members of Christ's body, the Church, but that our bodies are actually members of Christ. Look at verse 15...(READ vs. 15a)

That word "member" is also translated limb. We are the limbs of Christ in the way that my arms and legs are limbs of my body. So, we aren't just connected to Jesus spiritually. We are physical extensions of Christ into the world. Jesus hugs people with your arms. Jesus serves people with your hands. He encourages people with the words from your mouth. Your body CANNOT have a higher calling than that! It is the physical extension of Christ in this world. And so, Paul asks...(READ vs. 15b)

In other words, shall I take the eyes of Christ and unite them with pornography? Never! Shall I take the lips of Christ and kiss a woman who is not my wife? Never! Paul says that would be unthinkable because my body is a member of Christ. Where I go, Jesus goes. What I watch, Jesus watches. Who I touch, Jesus touches. The bond is so close that it's like we're married, which is where Paul goes next...(READ vs. 16-17)

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, “The two will become one flesh.” One man, one woman, bonded together for life by a covenant promise. That’s God’s design for sex and marriage. In marriage, two people say to each other I give all of me to all of you. I bind myself to you. That’s what “one flesh” means. It’s saying I will not reject you. I will not toss you aside. And the sexual union between a husband and wife is a physical expression of that bond and commitment to one another.

Paul says that the problem with sexual sin is that it mimics the “one flesh” union of marriage without the one flesh commitment. You see, in sexual sin, you’re not giving yourself, body and soul, to another person for a lifetime. Instead, you’re using that person to please your own body and satisfy your own desire. And, in doing so, if you are IN Christ, and Christ is IN you, you are joining Jesus in whatever sexual sin you are engaged in, whether it’s pornography, sex outside of marriage, adultery.

Paul says whoever is united in the Lord is one with him and his conclusion is this in **verse 18...(READ)** Paul says FLEE from sexual immorality. Run from it! Don’t even flirt with it or entertain it for a second. Run in the opposite direction of anything that falls outside of God’s design for sex.

And, for those of us who really want to live this out and honor God with our body, I think a good way for us to think about this is, *if my body is a member of Christ, then I need to flee from anything I don’t want to join Jesus to.*

In other words, do I want the eyes of Christ to watch what I’m watching right now or see what I’m seeing? If not, then flee! Get off that website, or close that app and delete it. Do I want to put Jesus and his reputation in a compromising position? If not, then flee! Don’t cozy up to the possibility to sexual immorality. Don’t hang around and see where it goes. Run the other way!

Sexual sin only ends up leaving deep wounds in our life or the lives of others. Yes, it involves the body, but it touches the soul like nothing else does. And when we use sex outside of God’s design for it, it causes pain and brokenness.

You see, God’s command here is not some arbitrary, prudish demand because He’s embarrassed by sex or wants to keep us from it. God created sex. It was His idea. One of the first commands God gives is for Adam and Eve to experience sex. This command to flee from sexual immorality, sex outside of His design, is rooted in His wisdom and desire to protect your body and your heart. Because your body matters. It matters to God. It matters because it’s a member of Christ. And finally, **your body matters because it’s a temple of the Holy Spirit.**

Look at **verse 19...(READ)**

This is incredible and it gives so much purpose for why we should pursue sexual integrity. You and I, who are followers of Jesus, we are filled with the glory of God in our bodies. We are His

temple. In 1 Kings 8, when King Solomon built the first temple, the priests brought the ark of the covenant into the most holy place. It says in verse 10 and 11...(READ 1 Kings 8:10-11)

In that moment, God took up residence in the Temple. We know that God cannot be contained by a physical location, but this was the place that He set apart to reveal his glory. When Jesus walked the earth, He became the new temple. He was the dwelling place of God. If you wanted to see the glory of God, you just had to look at Jesus. But now, WE are that place. Those who are in Christ, we are the ones in whom God resides. We are the ones who reveal His glory. That means that our bodies are sacred. They're holy. And this cost God greatly...(READ vs. 20)

What was the price? It was the price of Jesus who gave His body so that our bodies could become the temple of God. So that God would move into our lives. So that God could draw near to us. Jesus paid the price for that and now we belong to Him. We belong to the one who created us, redeemed us, restores and renews us.

Paul's conclusion, then, is for us to honor God with our bodies. Other translations say to "glorify God." And, I don't know about you, but I haven't always done that in regards to this. Chances are, you haven't either. In fact, I'd say all of us, at one point or another, have fallen into the trap of sexual immorality and have felt the sting of pain and brokenness from it.

And yet, God loves us so much that he paid the highest price for us. He purchased our freedom and forgiveness on the cross, so now we can be transformed into a New Creation. So, no matter what your past is, or how much guilt or shame it brings you, you can find grace and forgiveness, and a fresh start through Jesus.

And, I know that many of you have also felt the pain of someone else's sexual sin against you, in the form of abuse or an assault. And now, you struggle with anger and fear and shame and distrust. Maybe it's still going on right now and you don't know what to do or who to turn to. If that's you, we want to come alongside of you. Please, reach out to us this week and let us help you take your next steps towards finding hope and healing in Christ.

Your body matters. You matter. The Lord is for you and He loves you. And He gives us the grace we need to walk faithfully with him, even in this. And, if you want to learn more about that grace that's available, we'd love to help you find it and experience it with us.