

**2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021**

## **“Your Body Counts”**

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

**Introduction:** Some of you will be wondering where I’m going this morning with the theme of “Your Body Counts”.

#### **3 Unhealthy thoughts:**

- You can reject your body
- You can perfect your body
- You can neglect your body

The healthy attitude is to respect and protect it!

#### **6 principles on building a healthy body:**

- 1) Maintain your ideal weight
- 2) Balance your diet
- 3) Commit to regular exercise
- 4) Get enough sleep & rest
- 5) Reduce or avoid drinking alcohol
- 6) Live in harmony with God

I know you are getting excited about me unpacking those principles, but not today, as helpful as that might be, you can relax, we will stick to our text.

#### **A brief recap:**

In January we studied the book of Micah, then we did 5 weeks on 1 Corinthians dealing with the first 4 chapters, we then went to John’s Gospel for pre and post Easter messages. Today come back to 1 Corinthians for the next 5 weeks.

You will recall that 1 & 2 Corinthians were written by the Apostle Paul to Christians living in the city of Corinth. Paul had planted a church there during his second missionary journey. Corinth was a port city and a major centre of trade in the Roman Empire. Port cities have a tendency to get trashed kind of like hotel rooms. Sailors cruise into town, cause a ruckus while at port, then leave the place behind as somebody else's problem. It's a net gain for the city's economy, but definitely a net loss for the culture. Drunkenness, violence, and prostitution are the norm in cities like Corinth.

In addition to all of that, Corinth also hosted a major temple to the goddess Aphrodite. Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of love and beauty, later identified in the Roman pantheon as Venus. As a goddess of love and beauty, worship of Aphrodite frequently incorporated cult prostitution. That's exactly what it sounds like: for a donation to the temple, patrons could elicit the services of a temple prostitute, all in the name of religious worship.

The city of Corinth was a very worldly place, and thus the temptations it held for Christians there were very worldly in nature. It wasn't like Jerusalem, where the morally conservative religion of Judaism set the tone, nor was it like Athens, where wisdom and moderation were held in high esteem. Corinth was more like a modern day red light districts, attracting people looking to abandon their moral compass and drown their worries in fleshly passions.

Maybe in the midst of our culture, doing its best to make homosexuality and gay marriage and transgender lifestyles seem normal, you have become confused about what the Bible has to say about sexuality. My hope is that today, as we study the words of Scripture, you can find some answers and some help in these areas.

Various factions in the congregation would fight over who was the best pastor before the current one; Bring lawsuits against one another; Argue over sexual morality, whether it's better to be married or single, what makes a healthy marriage, what constitutes grounds for divorce, what are appropriate dietary practices; What is the correct understanding of resurrection and the afterlife; and on and on.

Paul repeatedly attempts to move people away from an attitude of “It’s all about me”, to a focus on the one who calls and saves them.

## **A New Framework: v12-13**

As Paul begins this section, he quotes three sayings that were popular among the Corinthians and he uses these to teach the church a new framework for how to think about sex. In v12-13 we read, *“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial.*

*“I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything.*

*You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.”*

*The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

*THE MESSAGE: Puts it this way; “Just because something is technically legal doesn’t mean that it’s spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I’d be a slave to my whims. You know the old saying, “First you eat to live, and then you live to eat”? Well, it may be true that the body is only a temporary thing, but that’s no excuse for stuffing your body with food, or indulging it with sex. Since the Master honours you with a body, honour him with your body!”*

The Corinthian Christians were attempting to use their newfound freedom in Christ to indulge in sin. No doubt they had in mind the types of things Paul teaches in Galatians 5 – *that we are free from the law and that our righteousness in Christ doesn’t come from our obedience but rather by God’s grace through faith.*

But they had forgotten what Paul went on to teach in Galatians 5:13 where he said, *“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.”* These believers wanted the forgiveness and grace and salvation that comes through Christ, but they didn’t want to submit to Him. They focused on their freedom in Christ the Saviour, but not their responsibilities to Him as Lord.

Consequently, Paul had to take their thought process and replace it with a new framework. He begins with the first quote, *“Everything is permissible for me.”* Similar to Satan’s twisting of Scripture in the Garden of Eden, or as he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, this statement has truth to it, but it falls short of the full truth. In Christ we are free, however, that doesn’t mean it’s wise to use that freedom in any way we choose so Paul gives some helpful safeguards to guide their thinking.

### **a) The first safeguard Paul offers is to consider whether the action you are considering is spiritually beneficial.**

In other words, if you are confused about whether something is right or wrong, ask yourself, *“Will this help or hinder my relationship with Jesus?”* Now, of course, not everything is so black and white. You might ask yourself that question and not be sure of the answer.

It can be confusing right? So how do you think through this when the issue is not so clear? Try asking other similar questions like,

-*“Where might this road take me if it continues?”*

-*“Could this decision move Jesus from the centre of my attention?”*

### **b) The second safeguard Paul offers is to consider whether the action you are considering might enslave you.**

Remember, the Corinthians are coming at this idea with a desire for freedom. They were excited about their new found freedom from the Law, yet the sexually immoral decisions they were making were simply leading to a new type of bondage! You don’t want to move from one type of bondage to another! You want to be free! So, Paul instructs us to ask another guiding question, *“Could this decision lead me to be under the influence of something rather than Jesus?”*

-If I enter into this relationship, is it healthy enough to allow Jesus to be our focus?

-If I go down this road of physical intimacy, at what point will I lose my ability to have self-control?

### **c) Paul considers another one of their sayings and responds to it. The Corinthians were rationalizing sexual immorality by comparing it to another simple, biological act of eating.**

They would say, *“Food for the stomach, and stomach for food,”* in other words, they were saying that just as eating and digesting food have no bearing on our spirituality, neither does sex – it’s just

physical. But Paul knew that this wasn't true and he wanted desperately for them to understand why, so he agrees with them that food and the stomach are both temporary things that God would destroy, our bodies are important to God.

With such strong temptations to revel in fleshly pleasures, I would argue that the city of Corinth is very much like our contemporary Australia. Our Australian culture has become so downright obsessed with sex that it's practically inescapable. Even our commercials are replete with sexual situations, never mind our movies, music, and TV shows.

And we Christians plunked down in the middle of it all, are supposed to fight all of this. We face temptations daily: temptations to lust after sensual images, to despise the sacred institution of marriage, to excuse or look the other way when our children and grandchildren choose to live together. We're called to live counterculturally, to follow the sixth commandment and live a sexually pure and decent life, but that's hard! Why not just give in now and be forgiven later? Can we be forgiven of any sin or not?

Paul teaches us that *"The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."* Paul wanted them to take on a more eternal and intentional mindset. He wanted them to view all of life as an opportunity to bring glory to God and that should be our mindset as well. The questions for this consideration would be to ask yourself, "Will this bring glory to God?"

That's exactly what Paul teaches this later in this book (1 Cor. 10:31) saying, *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."*

This is great framework for you to think through before you act. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Is it spiritually beneficial?
2. Might this lead to me being enslaved by sin?
3. Will this bring glory to God? (or dishonour?)

### **Instructions from God (1 Cor. 6:18-20)**

*"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body".*

One short, but powerful and very clear command is given – "FLEE sexual immorality." This means to "run away from a place or situation of danger; to move swiftly, to fly, or speed." You flee for your life. Scripture says, FLEE sexual immorality. Don't think about it. Don't flirt with it. Don't get near it. Don't go anywhere it's present. Don't watch others do it. Don't minimize it. Don't rationalize it. Don't experiment with it. FLEE.

I once read about the evangelist Billy Graham's personal policy. The late Billy Graham was disgusted at the multitude of scandals and corruption he witnessed in the televangelism industry. As he saw himself moving in that direction, he vowed that he would not allow that to happen to him. But he didn't resist temptation by facing it head-on; rather, he avoided it altogether. He made a point never to be alone with a woman outside of his own family. No exceptions: car rides, elevator rides, nothing. If a situation required him to be alone with a woman, he did not enter into that situation.

It sounds harsh, and such an extreme measure might not be necessary for those of us who don't live in the spotlight, but you know what? Billy Graham is one of the few who have come out of the televangelism industry with his reputation intact. Say what you will about his extreme avoidance policy, but it worked!

Let me give you some specific suggestions for exactly how to flee:

- Memorize specific Scriptures that deal with whatever temptation you are battling.
- Pray and ask God for deliverance.

-Phone a friend. Just like a sponsor in AA – get help now so that you can call in moments of temptation.

-Get your mind on something else. You can just make thoughts go away; you have to replace them with other thoughts. Get busy doing something else.

Why is this so important? Why is sexual immorality so dangerous? Why are we not to walk away, but to FLEE? V18-20 give us three strong reasons:

a) *“All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”* While sexual sin is not necessarily the worst sin and it’s certainly not unforgivable, Scripture tells us that it is unique in its consequences. It has a way of internally destroying us in a way that no other sin does. Why? Because of all sins it is the one sin that is the spiritual union of two people. You can commit other sins and those sins may be superficial. They may affect you on some level, but the sin of sexual intimacy with someone is the deepest uniting of two people that can happen and therefore it has the unique ability to destroy you at your very core.

b) As a follower of Christ, “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you.” As we talked about earlier with being united to Christ, you are now joined together with God. It could not be more inappropriate to involve Him in sin.

c) “You are not your own; you were bought at a price.” 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, *“it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”* Jesus paid for you and your redemption with His life – that’s how important this is to Him. You and your body belong to Jesus. Can you imagine taking something that belongs to Jesus and misusing it and having to turn it back into Him, messed up?

-So, think about this, your eyes belong to Jesus – are you allowing them to watch things that He would find repulsive and impure?

-Your mind belongs to Jesus – are you using it to think impure thoughts, or to lust?

-Your hands and feet belong to Jesus – are you allowing them to take hold of things you shouldn’t, or to take you to places you have no business being?

Paul closes with another very clear instruction, *“Therefore, honour God with your body.”*

Remember that – 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”*

This is to be the aim of our lives. In all we do or say, we exist to bring glory to God. Practice it and perfect it now so that you can enjoy it forever!

#### **Prayer:**

Lord, we ask that you give us grace to glorify you in our body. To recognize how important our body is. The interactions we have, the way we use our body, the way we steward our body. Take this great gift that you have given us in our body and use it to draw other people to Jesus by telling them of your work as we await the Holy Spirit to do your drawing work for us. We pray that you would do all of this for Christ’s glory and our good. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.