

12. Flee sexual immorality

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According to our Federal Government Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), they estimate that there are approximately 20 million new STD infections each year – almost half of them among young people ages 15 to 24. The cost of STDs to the U.S. health care system is estimated to be as much as \$16 billion annually.

Because many cases of STDs go undiagnosed – and some common viral infections, such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and genital herpes, are not reported to CDC at all – the reported cases of AIDS, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis represent only a fraction of the true burden of STDs in the United States.

Untreated STDs can lead to serious long-term health consequences, especially for adolescent girls and young women. CDC estimates that undiagnosed and untreated STDs cause at least 24,000 women in the United States each year to become infertile.

Are “morality,” “chastity,” “virginity,” and “decency” forgotten words? Have we totally forgotten the fact that in the beginning God established strict codes of moral conduct because He knew that sexual immorality spread disease, caused death, ruined families, betrayed trust, destroyed intimacy, and ultimately collapsed the nations? Are we so blinded by rationalization that we have blocked out of our minds the catastrophic death of societies that tolerated illicit practices – such as Sodom and Gomorrah, ancient Greece, debauched Rome?

This is one of the very good reasons why we should be sexually pure as the Bible clearly states whether you are married or not. God’s message still speaks with forceful and insightful relevance if we only open our hearts and spiritual ears to listen and obey. The Holy Spirit will speak to all of us through the apostle Paul regarding this very important and very personal subject.

A. WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO DO ANYTHING WE WANT

1 Corinthians 6:12-14 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

V12 was a popular phrase in Corinth. Our modern day motto would be, “If it makes you feel good, it must be right.” What a horrible way to justify humans’ bad ideas and behaviors! One promiscuous U of A law student told me long ago, “People cannot control their sexual desires.” Dogs and other animals don’t care to control themselves, but humans can. That’s why humans are superior to any animals.

Listen to me, please. Freedom is valuable and important, not because you are allowed to do anything you want, but more than that you are free from something or someone who masters you whether it is alcohol, drug, sex, or whatever. True freedom comes when you know that you are not bound by any of these worldly things or people. The Corinthian Christians were using their “liberty in Christ” as a license to sin.

The Corinthian Christians' logic was, "My body wants food, so I eat. My body wants sex, so I hire a temple prostitute. What's wrong with that?" Not only them, but many modern day Christians would argue, "It seems that God made our bodies with sexual drive, what's wrong with satisfying it?" Obviously they are ignorant of the Bible.

Because of our lustful sexual appetites, it may seem that God did make our bodies for sexual immorality. But God did not make our bodies in that way; sinful Adam caused to derail it from the original intention of God. We see the wisdom in God's design for the body and for sexual purity when we look at the problems of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. These are the price a person pays in the body for using the body in a way the Lord never intended – the body is not for sexual immorality – whether premarital, extramarital, homosexual, bisexual, incestuous, or bestial.

Paul wanted them to realize that when they didn't use their freedom to serve God, they unwittingly enslaved themselves to sin – they sold their freedom dirt cheap. So he encouraged them to refuse to be mastered by anything and to hang on to the precious freedom Christ had won for them.

B. TWO BECOME ONE FLESH

1 Corinthians 6:15-18 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 harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

Some of the Corinthians saw no harm in visiting the temple prostitutes and committing fornication or adultery. There were a thousand temple prostitutes at the temple of Aphrodite.

When an individual Christian commits sexual immorality, it disgraces the entire body of Christ, linking the body of Christ to immorality, especially, those who are in the leadership position of ministries. Their thoughtless behaviors have given great occasions to the enemies of Lord to blaspheme.

When we have sexual relations outside of marriage, we form an immoral union that damages our holy alliance with God through Christ.

In a sexual relationship, a husband and wife become "one flesh" in a way that is under God's blessing. In sex outside of marriage, the partners become "one flesh" in a way that is under God's curse. Somehow many people think that "casual sex" is a thing to do before marriage. They have no idea what kind of disaster they are heading into with the "casual sex." In the Biblical understanding of sex, there is no such thing as "casual sex."

I know that some people are thinking, "Hey preacher, I've never had sex outside of marriage. I just look at porno magazines and watch porno movies." You might think that I am a hard nose to say this, but hear me, please. It seems that the actresses in the movies don't have problems with doing sex scenes and taking clothes off and they get paid. Tell me what difference you see between them and actual prostitutes

or strippers in strip clubs. I don't see any difference. So, if your thing is watching and looking at pornography, according to the words of Jesus from the Book of Matthew, you have committed an adultery.

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

And some of you would say, "Alright, I don't look at porno magazines or watch porno movies. So I am good." For that I have a question for you: "Do you watch any movie that shows suggestive sex scenes or woman's bare chest or barely covered? Would you watch it if Jesus is sitting next to you?" I think that we all know the answer.

In v16, the apostle was quoting what the Lord God said to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:24. Paul did not suggest that being joined to a harlot was the equivalent of marriage, because marriage also involves commitment. The man and woman leave the parents' homes to begin their own new home.

This helps us understand why sex within marriage can be an enriching experience of growth, because it is based on lifelong commitment. When two people pledge their love and faithfulness to each other, they lay a strong foundation on which to build. Marriage protects sex and enables the couple, committed to each other, to grow in this wonderful experience.

For a short time, there may be excitement and enjoyment in sexual experience outside of marriage, but there is never enrichment. Sex apart from marriage has a way of weakening future relationships due to mistrust, as every Christian marriage counselor will tell you.

The apostle Paul doesn't tell us to be brave and resist the lustful passion of sexual immorality, but to flee from its very presence in v18. Many have fallen because they underestimated the power of lustful passion, or thought they would "test" themselves and see how much they could "handle" like Samson did in the Book of Judges. Instead, we should follow the example of Joseph in Genesis 39, who fled from sexual immorality – even when it cost him everything to do so.

Paul does not say that Christians should flee sex, only sexual immorality. God gave sex as a precious gift to mankind, and uses it powerfully to bond husband and wife together in a true one-flesh relationship. But sexual immorality works against God's good purpose for sex, working against a true and godly one-flesh relationship.

Sex outside of marriage is like a man robbing a bank: he gets something, but it is not his and he will one day pay for it with consequences. Sex within marriage can be like a person depositing money into a bank: there is safety, security, and he will collect dividends.

C. YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Under the old covenant, the temple was either a tabernacle in the wilderness or a great building in Jerusalem where the high priest, representing the people, met God.

But ever since the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, God does not live in a temple. Under the new covenant, God lives in the hearts and lives of His believers.

We are so careful about cleaning and taking care of the outside of our bodies. But what about the inside? Is there something that needs to be cleansed inside? When we give our lives to Christ and put our trust in Him, He comes in and cleans house.

If we are filled with the Spirit, it must influence our sexual behavior. And if we commit sexual immorality as Christians, we are polluting God's temple. Think about this with me, please. God the Father created our bodies; God the Son redeemed them and made them part of His body; and God the Spirit indwells our bodies and makes them the very temple of God. How dare can we defile God's temple by using our bodies for immorality?

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul wrote that the church as a whole was the temple of the Holy Spirit. Now he says the same is true, in a spiritual sense, of individual Christians.

Please DO NOT use these verses to insist that eating right and exercising regularly is taking care of the temple of the Holy Spirit. I am not against eating right and exercising, but if you interpret this portion of the Scripture like that, you are taking it out of context which is not the right way to do it.

I don't know where you are in this. If you were involved in sexual immorality previously or currently, but have not repented of it, you are probably keeping it secretly. But the Lord knows every detail of it. Do not be condemned, however. The Lord does not condemn you, but convicts you to repent of your sins. Confess your sins to Him who is full of grace and abound in love, yet holy and righteous. If you truly repent of your sins, He will forgive your sins like He did to the woman who got caught in the very act of adultery in John chapter 8. And He would tell you, "Go sin no more."

Your restoration process can only start from true repentance. It won't be easy, because you broke your marriage vow and caused the mistrust from your spouse if you are married. If you are a single, walk away from any connection that led you to your spiritual fall at all cost. But the Lord will be there with you every step to give you strength if you only rely on Him.

Remember, whatever controls you, whatever drives you to keep living each day, masters you. It is never too late to change your masters. The choice is entirely yours. What will it be? Whom will you serve?

D. APPLICATIONS

1) We should serve God through our bodies and spirits, worship Him through obedience and abstain from any form of sexual immorality.

Don't allow yourself to fall into temptation. Don't trust your own willpower, because your willpower is nothing in front of your lame excuse and justification to sin. Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

2) Sex within marriage is a beautiful river that brings life and refreshment, but sex outside marriage is a sewer that defiles everything it touches.

I am sure that y'all have heard about the myth of the greener grass on the other side of the fence. Yes, it is greener because it is located right next to a cesspool.