

Our Bodies Belong to God

Marcus caught the girl looking at him for what seemed like the umpteenth time. He was standing at the end of the big mirror in the gym. He held massive dumbbells in each hand, hoisting them in a series of curls.

The girl was cute. Marcus had noticed her before. He even rearranged his schedule to be working out at the same time. While he was working out, Marcus thought about what he would say to the young woman—if anything.

His brothers teased him that he wasn't "smooth" with women. Marcus still had memories of being the "big, fat dude" in middle school. But those days were behind him.

But with Marcus's recent Christian conversion, he was learning other things about himself. First and foremost, his body belonged to the Lord. He knew it meant he should glorify God, with his body. But it all still seemed abstract and strange to him. Marcus wanted to show how fit he had become and all the work he had put into his physique. What was so wrong about that?

He set the weights back in the stacks; and as he did, he watched in the mirror as the young woman climbed off the elliptical and went to another area to continue her workout.

Marcus straightened and tried to refocus on his workout. *Maybe she will notice me if I could just get a bit stronger*, he thought to himself.

- 1.** *How does our freedom in Christ impact our bodies?*
- 2.** *In what ways should you treat your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit?*
- 3.** *How does the knowledge that God created your physical body inform your attitude about it?*

LESSON FOCUS: Hold nothing back from being transformed by God.

Members of Christ

1 Corinthians 6:12–17 KJV

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. 14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. 15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:12–17 NIV

¹² "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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Paul begins to address the Corinthians' false view of the body in verse 12. Interpreters have long questioned why Paul states "all things are lawful unto me" (KJV) in the context of an argument against *porneia*, the Greek word for all forms of sexual immorality. Almost everyone now thinks that Paul is quoting the Corinthians, whether something they said in their letter to him or relayed to him by

Chloe's people. That's why the NIV puts quotes around the same section.

Paul is correcting their claim of total freedom. Their liberty in Christ does not extend to doing things that are not good or that will place them under the power of sin. Paul argues that readers should not use their freedom in ways that harm the church, or enslave themselves.

Verse 13 begins with another Corinthian slogan. Some of the Corinthians defended their sexual immorality by saying that it doesn't matter how one uses his or her body. They compared the relationship of the body and sexual activity to the stomach and food, which are made for each other. From a strictly egocentric perspective, it might look like the body and sex just go together, and using the body for sex doesn't carry any great significance.

Paul responds by correcting this false view of the body and its purposes. Paul shows the weakness with their analogy: the body is not meant for sexuality, but for the Lord. Its true purpose is to honor the Lord Jesus, not to satisfy one's lustful desires. And just as God's intent for our bodies is the glory of Christ, so the God who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us up by His own power (v. 14). The body is not some purposeless mass of flesh and bones; it is created by God for good purposes.

In verse 15, Paul transitions to another argument against the immoral use of the body. His specific concern is about visiting prostitutes for sex. Paul reminds the Corinthians that their bodies are "members" of Christ, a metaphor that portrays the community as parts of Christ's own body (1 Cor. 12:1–27). Paul goes further and makes the surprising claim that some of the Corinthians are actually offering the members of Christ to a prostitute.

Paul combines this body metaphor with an allusion to Genesis 2:24, which says that, when men and women come together, "the two will become one flesh." If men and women become one body in sexual union (1 Cor. 6:16), and believers are part of Christ's body (v. 15), then having sex with a prostitute would unite Christ with a

prostitute. This way of using the body would dishonor Christ, the one to whom believers are joined in one spirit (v. 17).

Paul is not drawing a contrast between flesh and spirit here. He is not saying that we are united to Christ just “in spirit.” Instead, he is showing the full unity between Christ and His people—a unity created by the Holy Spirit. A believer who visits a prostitute for sex makes Christ one body with that prostitute, which can only dishonor Christ.

4. *How does Paul tell his audience to use (or not use) their freedom in Christ?*

5. *What is Paul’s correction of the analogy of food and the stomach (v. 13)?*

6. *Why would a believer’s sex with a prostitute dishonor Christ?*

The Temple of God

1 Corinthians 6:18–20 KJV

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.

1 Corinthians 6:18–20 NIV

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

In verses 18–20, Paul offers one more argument for using the body properly. Paul offers a concise and explicit command: “flee from sexual immorality” (v. 18). The Greek verb for “flee” can mean to avoid something bad,

even to “shun” it. Paul warns the Corinthians to stay away from sexual sin. A command to “flee” would connect back to Paul’s advice to avoid being brought under the power of another (v. 12). If sexual sin is an enslaving force, then the Corinthians must literally “flee” from its grasp.

Verse 18 gives another reason for the command to flee: sexual sin differs from other types of sin. The problem is not that God judges sexual sins more harshly, or that the people who commit them are uniquely evil. The problem is that sexual immorality involves sinning against one’s own body, and one’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19). It is a self-destructive thing to do.

Paul returns to a metaphor he used in 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 (believers are a temple of Christ, see last week’s lesson). But here he identifies each person’s body as an individual temple. Since the Holy Spirit dwells in every member of the community, a believer who engages in sexual sin desecrates the Spirit’s temple. The members of the community have received the Spirit from God (v. 19), so sinning against the body reflects a lack of respect and gratitude for the gift that God has given.

The Spirit is not simply a gift. The Spirit’s presence in our bodies reflects God’s ownership. Believers are not their own; they belong to God. Those who follow Christ have a new role as God’s servant (see also Romans 6). Paul extends the metaphor, affirming that the believers are “bought at a price” (v. 20). Interestingly, Paul does not say what that price is! He might mean Christ’s costly death (Rev. 5:9). Yet it is not necessary to precisely identify the price to understand the point. Believers now belong to God, and they must glorify Him in body and spirit.

7. What makes sexual immorality unlike other sins?

8. Why does Paul call the individual believers a “temple?”

9. What might Paul mean by, “You were bought at a price” (v. 20)?

A New, True You

Looking back over my adolescence and young adulthood as a more mature Christian, I can see why, back then, I felt the need at times to stifle my Christianity or loyalty to God for the sake of “going along to get along.” I had this fear of seeming like someone who would not be any fun to be around or who would bring down the mood by talking about what Jesus would do. In a sense, I guess I did not feel free to be my Christian self.

I also remember that, had I leaned more into my faith and meditated more on God’s Word, I would not have let my human desires put me in situations that left me feeling like a failure in God’s eyes. I know that there is no need to dwell on prior mistakes, and it is best to learn from the past, but it is human nature to wonder what could have been had I stayed firm in my faith.

What more seasoned Christians know is that using our whole beings—the body included—for the glory of God far outweighs any satisfaction we get from using our bodies to honor and please ourselves. God understands our earthly desire to “go along to get along,” which is an age-old story that has gotten many people in trouble.

But I also want to help others see that shame does nothing but drive us deeper into the wrong patterns. God is not keeping count of my past mistakes. The love of God invites all believers to find the meaning of real freedom—freedom from being slaves to sin, slaves to our desires, or captive to what the world expects. I belong to God!

10. *Has the desire to “go along to get along” ever hindered your availability to be wholly transformed by God? When?*

11. *Why do people, even believers, sometimes resist committing to using their bodies for God?*

12. *Why is it important to challenge—perhaps even set aside—many of our innate desires?*

Submitting Attitudes and Desires to God

As we contemplate a lesson about holding our bodies as sacred for God's presence—temples for the Holy Spirit—we may recognize that our attitudes and desires need to be reformed. Ask God to show you any unhelpful or self-destructive patterns that God would ask you to bring to Him in prayer. Consider writing "food," "sex," "physical appearance," or another related response in the blank below, as you offer a private prayer.

► *In what I say or do, I have not always treated my body as a temple of God's Spirit. I surrender my desires for God to reshape, for my good, and I ask God to alter my attitude around*

Father, I devote myself to You, even my body.

KEY VERSE

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

—1 Corinthians 6:19 KJV

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.

—1 Corinthians 6:19 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 11 through August 17

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* for devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Isaiah 49:1–6 A Light to the Nations.

Tues. Romans 9:14–24—God's Mercy Reaches All.

Wed. Romans 10:1–15—Salvation Is for All.

Thurs. Romans 11:16–29—Grafted Branches.

Fri. Zechariah 8:1–12—God Will Dwell in Our Midst.

Sat. Zechariah 8:13–23—Seek God Together.

Sun. Ephesians 2:11–22—Built into a Holy Temple.