

Flee sexual immorality

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

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Have you ever heard of the circle of blessing? The circle of blessing is the place where we find God's blessing. It is not the place we earn God's blessing, but the place where it comes to us when he wills it to. It is the place where life, peace and joy are found. But they only exist inside the circle. Outside the circle is sin. It is danger and death. Some people ignore God's rules and disrespect the people God has placed as authorities, like parents, pastors and elders, and expect to have joy, peace and life. That will not happen. Life, peace and blessing are found with God inside the circle. God is good, and his rules are for our blessing. How many of you give your children rules to harm them or to make sure they do not enjoy life? God is even better than us. His will is always good. If we love God and try and live in ways that please him, we will experience him more. This was part of our parenting class. By the way, we will be having that class again in the fall. But our text today is about a specific danger to our joy. It is about sexual immorality. Paul teaches at least three principles to help us think biblically about sex. The Bible is filled with teachings about sex. This passage, in particular, teaches us three very important ideas:

1. Listen to God and not the culture about sex.
2. God created sex to have a profound impact on people.
3. Sexual immorality dishonors the temple of God.

1. Listen to God and not the culture about sex

Our text reads:

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated 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. (1 Corinthians 6:12-14)

If you will notice, the text has quotation marks. The part in the quotation is a saying of some group of the Corinthians and the response that follows is from Paul. The Corinthians were defending sexual immorality with a saying. It looks like this:

Some Corinthians

1. *"All things are lawful for me."*
2. *"All things are lawful for me."*
3. *"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food."*

Apostle Paul

1. *"Not all things are helpful."*
2. *"I will not be dominated by anything."*
3. *"God will destroy both one and the other."*

The first statement is "***all things are lawful for me***". In our day, you might hear a person saying, "I can do whatever I want with my body." While that may appeal to our rebellious side, in the end, Paul reminds us of two truths. First, **not everything is beneficial**. That means that though we can do many things, not every path is going to produce good results. Not every path will be good for you. Be wise. Don't play with freedom. Can you drink alcohol as a legal adult? Of course, you can. But did you know that drinking alcohol leads to a greater chance of sexual immorality? According to the *Journal of Sex Research*, there is a profound connection between drinking and sex with strangers. An astounding 89 percent of sexual encounters involved drinking when the partner was a random stranger. Drinking weakens the mind and the will. It is dangerous when there is temptation. If you are dating, don't drink together and be alone. It can lead to sexual immorality. We live in the "sexting" age. People send naked or half-dressed photos to each. As a matter of fact, it is common amongst teens. But God does not give us permission to tempt others or to lust after others. It is poison for our souls.

Second, Paul tells them that **he will not be dominated by anything**. Some activities cause addiction. Sexual activities can quickly become overpowering and consuming. Paul warns the believers that addictions will come if their sexual activity persists. The Corinthians were struggling with prostitution because it was so prevalent and accepted in their culture. That is a lot like us today, and pornography. I doubt there is a person in this room who has not been affected by pornography. Whether you are addicted to it, whether your marriage is in trouble because of it, or whether you have only observed its effects on others. The enemy of your soul has a plan for how he wants to use pornography to ruin your life in Christ. He wants to master you. Here are 10 purposes the devil has for pornography. I am sure there are more, but here is my list:

1. To keep you away from God.
2. To make you joyless through feelings of shame, guilt and condemnation.
3. To ruin your desire to witness.
4. To make you a slave of sin and therefore useless for the Kingdom.
5. To make you objectify women and therefore not value them as humans and creatures made in God's image.

6. To ruin sex as God's intended gift for marriage.
7. To make sex about personal gratification only.
8. To create false beliefs in girls and women about how through sex they can control men, get attention from men, and be valued and loved by men.
9. To create boredom with sex through repeated familiarity, to the point that we need to look for a newer stranger or twisted ways to be fulfilled.
10. To destroy future marriages.

Today, I want God to open our eyes to one of the great spiritual battles of our time. I believe one big reason we are not seeing more people getting saved is pornography. One big reason we see so many depressed and defeated Christians is that many of us have stepped out of God's blessings. We are like men in the desert, asking why there is no rain. If you want water, don't go to the desert. If you want joy that lasts, don't turn to sin. God declares in his word that we will reap what we sow. Some of you are reaping joyless death, because you have sown seeds of death. That is not God's plan for you. If you are hearing God today, change. You died with Christ. You have the power to change. There is life for you. There is forgiveness. Don't choose death. Choose life. Choose blessing. Choose God.

Lastly, some Corinthians were saying, "***Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.***" What that means is that their sexual desires were like hunger pains. God had created them to be satisfied. God had created them to desire sex, so, therefore, God must agree with their sexual fulfillment with prostitutes. To this, Paul responds in two ways. First, he reminds them that ***these things will be destroyed.*** In the new heaven and the new earth, there will be no sex. Sex is intended on earth, but God will not continue these things forever. Being in the presence of God will be so great that sex will seem uninteresting to us by comparison, or perhaps we won't even have that desire. Paul agrees that God has created sex and sexual desire. What he disagrees with is the way one should seek to fulfill this desire. Paul also challenges their bad ideas about the purpose of the body. The primary reason we were given bodies was to glorify God not give in to any desire we have. You must keep God first. When God is first, life makes sense. But when any other desire becomes first, we only bring bad things upon us.

2. God created sex to have a profound impact on people

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 he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one 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. (1 Corinthians 6:15-17)

Sex is not some casual event between people; it is a profound soul-bonding activity. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are doing the unthinkable. They are one with Christ, and they are joining Christ to a prostitute through sexual relations. This is intended to shock the Corinthians by reminding them of the profound connection we have to Christ, and we can have through sex. Some

Christians misunderstand this text to mean that any time a person has intercourse they are married. But as the theologian Tom Schreiner says:

"Paul is not claiming that every sexual union constitutes marriage, but he does suggest that sexual relations forge a profound relationship between two people. The notion that a sexual encounter is casual and insignificant runs counter to what is taught about sexual relations in the Old Testament. There is a profound psycho-physical union in sexual consummation; but being united with the Lord has an even deeper significance, for those who belong to Christ are one spirit with him. Given the union of believers with Christ, sexual liaisons with prostitutes tarnish the bond between Christ and believers."

Let me just give you three quick examples of how science and research confirm the teaching of the Bible that sex is more than just a casual activity. First, neuroscience shows sex leads to a powerful brain attachment. In their groundbreaking book *Hooked: New Science on How Casual Sex Is Affecting Our Children*, Drs. Joe McIlhaney Jr. and Freda McKissic Bush demonstrate how chemicals released in our brains during sexual activity can lead to attachment and addiction. That means that not only is there pleasure; there is physical attachment through a physical brain matter change. In fact, even those addicted to pornography show changes to the structure of their brains that are similar to individuals addicted to drugs and alcohol. Sex actually changes the physical makeup of our brains. This is part of what God intended to happen with sex. We are intended to become joined to our mates and to be physically changed by that.

Second, scientific research clearly shows that sex before marriage can lead to terrible diseases. The Center for Disease Control of the USA estimates that nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted infections occur every year in the USA, and half are among young people aged 15–24. What is most shocking is that these 15-24-year-old's only make up 25% of the sexually active population. What is the reason for such a high amount of disease in this age group? Simply put, they are not married. They are playing with sex outside of marriage, and as a result, they are more likely to get diseases.

Lastly, research has shown that living together before marriage greatly increases marital unhappiness. The social-science data on this is clear. First, it leads to higher divorce rates after marriage. People who have the experience of living together and who marry have a 50 to 80 percent higher likelihood of divorcing than married couples who never lived together. Living together before marriage also leads to a lower-quality marital relationship. Researchers at UCLA found that people who live together experienced significantly more difficulty in their marriages with adultery, alcohol, drugs, and independence than couples who did not. Living together is no replacement for marriage, nor is it a trial run. Living outside the circle of blessing actually affects us when we are married. It is not just a casual encounter for fun. God's plan is that sex would exist between one man and one woman who are married. So all the effects of sex are intended for marriage.

Let me pause a moment. Some of you might be feeling really guilty. Maybe you have made some mistakes. The beautiful thing about Jesus is his arms are always open. He took the pain and the nails so you could draw close to God. Today is the day of your salvation. Our God calms the sea. He parts the ocean. Any and all of these things can be overcome. There may be a fight. There may even be consequences, but God is waiting for you. If you are here and have yet to fall into these traps, learn from God's word. Sex was God's idea, and it only really works under his guidance.

Lastly, there is also an implicit promise in the text. You can be one spirit with the Lord. Stop and listen to that statement. That is not a weird statement. It only means that God created you not for some distant relationship. He created you for a close and personal one. You can hear his voice through his word. You can sense his presence as you worship him. You can pray and be sure he is hearing you. You can know God intimately. Some of you know about God. But if you will just come to Jesus. You can know God personally; you can be one spirit with him. If you want to have a personal relationship with Jesus, please ask Pastor Tim or me after the service. We would love to talk with you. Today is the day for you to know God.

Sexual immorality dishonors the temple of God

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.

(1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

Flee from sexual immorality. To flee is to run away. The idea for Paul is a very strong concept. He does not say be careful with sexual immorality. He does not say think about the danger of sexual immorality. Paul says, run for your life. Run. Flee. It will destroy you. There are two practical examples in the Bible. The first is David. In 2 Samuel 11:2-4, it says:

It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her.

David's greatest mistake ever was one of sexual immorality. It led to the death of the woman's husband. It led to the death of three of his children and the rape of his daughter. It led to the violence inside his own family with brother killing brother and eventually his own son trying to kill him. All of these consequences were from one incident of sexual immorality. In 2 Samuel 12:9-10, we read God's complaint against David:

Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.

But Joseph is the other example. He did what was right in God's eyes. In Genesis 39:6-12, we read the following account:

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has

put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.

Let me give you three practical things you can learn by comparing these stories. First, Joseph remembered sexual immorality was a grave sin against God; David ignored God. Second, Joseph ran from the sexual immorality, while David invited it. The Bible says God was with Joseph, but it says God brought discipline on David. David was still his son. David eventually repented and was forgiven. But David had to suffer the consequences and the shame of his actions. Sexual immorality is life or death. It is not a joke. Learn from these men. You will be one of them. All of us are. The question is, which one are you going to be like, Joseph or David?

Remember who you are; you are the very temple of God. Could you imagine walking into this Church and seeing trash and graffiti on every wall and seat? Could you imagine it filled with the smell of dead animals? Would it make you want to be here? Would it lead you to worship? It would probably make you want to leave. Remember you are the temple of God. Every time you sin sexually, you use God's sacred temple to do it. Everything in this life is made by God for God. We are never truly owners of anything. My life is God's life. My gifts are God's gifts. My money is God's money. My body is God's body. Why? First, because he created it. But secondly, (and this is an even more powerful reason), because he bought it with his own blood on the cross. You see, the cross was not only the place where our sins were paid for. It is the place where God bought us out of sin. We belonged to death and the devil until he bought us. And, this brings me to repeat our last text for you:

"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."
(1 Corinthians 6:20)

You must remember that what you do to your body and with your body, you do to God's property.

There once was a woman who had a pet snake she loved very much. The snake was about 7 feet long, and one day it just stopped eating. After several weeks of trying everything she could to get the snake to eat, the woman took it to the vet. The woman explained the situation to the vet, and he asked her, "Has your snake been sleeping with you at night or snuggling really close and stretching himself out?" The woman replied, "Yes he's been doing it every day, and it makes me so sad that I can't help him feel better." The vet says, "Ma'am your snake is not sick, he has been preparing to eat you. He's been sizing you up every day so he knows how big he has to be, and he is not eating so he can make enough room to digest you."

You see, your sin is like that snake. You feed it. You care for it. But what you do not know is that from one moment to the next, it will devour you. Some of you are there. You are in pain. You are hopeless. You are dead on the inside. You play with sex and pornography feeding it like that snake. But God says, run. Run from sexual immorality. Sex is a very good thing when done inside of

marriage. It blesses and unites people. Outside of marriage, it is a snake waiting to devour you. May God wake us up to the dangers of sexual immorality.

Discussion questions:

- 1.** What are some of the dangers of sexual immorality?
- 2.** Is drinking a sin? How is it dangerous in the wrong situations?
- 3.** What lies about sex are people being told today that contradict 1 Corinthians 6:12-20?
- 4.** I mention 10 reasons the devil promotes pornography. Think about one or two and how they weaken Christians.
- 5.** What can you learn from the David and Joseph story?
- 6.** How should we treat the temple of God?
- 7.** What is the difference between an owner and a steward? How do you feel to know that you are not really the owner of anything?