

Honor the Lord with our Bodies

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

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. 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.

I wonder what the servants thought. How much gossip had been swirling around the palace since King David brought Bathsheba into his life? Not just that, but now there was a baby. Then the prophet Nathan showed up. Once he left, David's one-year-old was dying. The king who had fully indulged himself for every sensual desire now lay prostrate on the ground through the night. David was fasting.

What were the servants thinking? One who gave himself to the full intentions of bodily cravings was now denying himself food and water and sleep. What did the servants think? Was David okay? Should we stop this?

David was being intentional with his body again before the Lord. He was repentant and sorrowful before the Lord while the child was still breathing. David was praying that God would change his mind and spare the child's life. In God's good way and purpose, the child still died.

The servants were scared to tell David. He noticed. And when they did tell him, he stood up again. He cleaned up, oiled his hair, ate food, drank water, and went to sleep in his own bed. Before the child died, David's physical well-being was deeply affected. After the child died, King David returned to normal. Why?

To answer that, it is important to talk about our bodies. Where do our bodies come from? Who made them? This is an important topic! It's one that is right here in Scripture. It shares with us the heart of God, his design and purpose for humanity and the promise that is ours through Jesus. Today let's look at 1 Corinthians 6 and seek to honor the Lord with our bodies.

Keep this in mind: this is a spiritual conversation. Your use of your body is a matter of your Christian faith. It's your creed of what you believe about God and what God says about you.

The very first thing Paul does is deal with the Corinthians way of thinking about the use of their bodies. Corinth was known as the Las Vegas of Greece. All other Greeks knew that Corinth was the place where people did whatever they wanted. And not in a good way. It had its reputation for immorality. That even impacted believers who lived there. Paul knew it too. So he took the excuses for immorality that they held on to. He put them out on the table to deal with them as the faith issues that they were.

First off, Paul quotes Christian Corinthian thinking that said, "Everything is permissible. The Corinthians had the thought that because of what Jesus had done, they had freedom in Christ to do anything. They cherished this word permissible. They were abusing it as permission to do

whatever they wanted with their body. They were looking at their bodies as permissible tools for anything carnal to just be carnal and not a part of their faith.

Paul counters, “But not everything is beneficial.” It’s not just about permission when it comes to your freedom in Christ. All things God wants for us are also to be beneficial. What brings God glory? What serves my neighbor? What serves the benefit of my own body, soul, and life as God’s child?

Not everything is beneficial, Paul says. You can do things that are not beneficial to you. You can use your body in ways that bring you both physical and spiritual harm. Then you’re not walking in faith nor expressing your belief. We may joke about having a sweet tooth and being an adrenaline junkie or a couch potato. But are we making excuses and granting ourselves permission without regard to faith’s word of beneficial? Are we allowing other masters to control our lives—addiction, substance abuse, pornography? Let us not be mastered by anything. We struggle with these real issues by God’s strength and for his glory.

The wonderful God talk about our bodies today features three comforting realities because of God’s grace and power. They are permanency, intimacy, and intent.

The Corinthians thought the body was temporary. Paul says the opposite: permanent. He quotes them again: *“Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.”* The Corinthians excused sexual immorality done with their bodies as just a carnal desire that would someday be destroyed by God anyway. They reasoned: “Jesus really just cares about the inner workings of our hearts and our thoughts. Our soul and our inner life are all that really matter. This body is just the wrapping paper. Someday God will destroy it. Then we’ll throw the wrapper away. So the body may have its hunger, and someday I won’t hunger. The body has its thirst. Someday I won’t thirst. The body get tired. Someday I won’t be tired. The body lusts, but someday I won’t have it, and I won’t lust in heaven.”

Paul says the exact opposite! Your body is permanent. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so he will raise us also through him. We may experience physical weakness and sickness and pain. We really look forward to the day when we won’t experience those things. But we never have to think of a day when we will be without our bodies. When God sees humanity, those he saved, he sees you, body and soul.

This underscores the significance our bodies have in speaking to our identities as people who are stitched together in our mother’s wombs. You don’t become you later on when you open your eyes for the first time. You are you, both body and soul, according to the biblical definition. Each soul that sins will die, God says, and our bodies are bodies of death, Paul says. God sent Jesus for you into death—a body prepared for him!—to fully rescue us and to be raised again! When God thinks of bringing you to heaven and Jesus says he’s preparing a place for you, it’s not just a place for you soul. That is a place for you with a glorified body. This is God’s plan to raise you from the dead.

How would I care for something I know is permanent? I would always have a look at my own body as me and see how God has put me in his plan of salvation. How fully God has me, body and soul, in his eternal thought! May my stewardship of my body do the same.

In ancient Corinth, there were over a thousand temple prostitutes at the temple of the Greek goddess of love. Culturally, that kind of prostitution was a part of everyday life. Paul says the

opposite as he calls on the Corinthians to apply their faith: *“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?”*

Your bodies are members of Christ himself. Let that sink in. You, body and soul, have been joined to Christ and Christ to you by faith. In another place, Paul says, *“When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4). This is all intimacy talk. To say that where you are, Christ is, and where Christ is, we shall be. Just as my life is *“hidden with Christ in God”* (Colossians 3:3). Hidden with Christ, buried with Christ into his death, that we may rise to live a new life in Christ. *“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?”* See, it's a marriage union. You are united with the Lord!

This is God's grace. It's God's love through God's Son. Because of it, any talk about our bodies becomes talk about our faith. When we talk about using our bodies, we never leave our favorite topic: Christ! Paul makes sure we keep our bodies and Christ himself in the same conversation.

Should such a member of Christ be united to sin? To a prostitute or living outside of marriage? To gluttony? To drunkenness? Would you willingly abuse the body of Christ in such a way? This is not just about sexual union with another person. This is a faith conversation about spiritual intimacy.

You are the object of God's highest love. You, body and soul, are united to Christ himself in a spiritual union and intimacy. Honor him with your body!

The third person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God does holy things and makes us holy. Paul makes sure we consider this as we use our bodies. *“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; you were bought at a price.”*

Imagine yourself as a home on the market that God was eager to buy up and redeem for himself. He hands your keys over to the Holy Spirit. “Here, Spirit, take the keys, and go live there. Fill the house with your presence. All the decorating and room designs are for your use and glory. Let this house be set apart and distinct from the others.” What a glorious thought to be such a property in the world! This is God's purchase claim on you. It comes with such a price tag: the blood of Christ! It is God's intent to use you for his glory by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Would you bring home idols? Put up a poster of sin and Satan on the wall? Never! This is where God's reputation is to be nurtured and developed and expressed and shown to the world. The Holy Spirit is fully intent on using this house. This is his house for his holiness.

I wonder what Jesus' disciples thought. Their Lord had never looked less like a lord. From the crown of thorns on his head to the nails in his feet. Jesus seemed so intent on Jerusalem and arriving at his death. What were his disciples thinking? Just three days later, and there he was again. With a pierced side and nail marks and all, but alive. Gloriously alive. Bodily alive! A Savior we someday can meet in person and hug in a body that is not to be discarded, but glorious. This is God's plan and intent for us!

I'm not sure what will change in your life. Will it involve food, sleep, drink, stress, or exercise? Whatever it is, take this message with you and honor the Lord with your body.