

"If It Feels Good, Do It?" 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Introduction

- When you read 1 Corinthians, this letter to a failed church, sometimes it seems like Paul just hopscotch's from one problem to another and each of those problems are disconnected and unrelated. But every single one of the problems in the Corinthian church has a single solitary root cause. Paul's answer to all of the Corinthian problems; poor church leadership, this flashy whiz-bang kind of preaching that amounts to nothing, the internal divisions and infighting, the sexual immorality, the lawsuits, the lack of accountability, the confusion about marriage, all of the turtles in the road if you remember that illustration; his answer is the same. The cross. Paul's answer to the failed church of Corinth is the cross. The reason the Corinthians were no different than their pagan neighbors was because they didn't get the cross.
- Hopefully by now it's starting to sink in. The reason why we, now, the church now, the reason we are basically no different than the culture is because we don't understand the cross. People, it's all about the cross. The Christian life is by definition cross-centered. Luke 9:23. *If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* Individuals and churches either flounder or flourish by becoming more or less cross-centered. The cross of Christ must necessarily make every area of your life fundamentally different than the life of your pagan neighbor. Your life at work, because of the cross, must be different than the way everybody else at your job goes about and views their work. Because of the cross, the way you respond to illness and crises must be different than the way everybody else you know responds to illness and crises. The way you spend and save your money, what you give your time to or don't give your time to, your priorities, how you think, your family life, what you watch, what you listen to, what you read, how you eat, how you sleep, how you talk to and relate to other people, how and what you worship, the cross changes everything—for those who are willing to bear that cross. We simply haven't let the cross change us enough individually or as a church.
- This is an incredibly important passage. Yes this passage talks about sex—that's the symptomatic, visible turtle obstacle in the road. But the real issue is the physical body. The passage this morning is about our bodies. Our skin and bones. I think these verses teach us that the cross of Christ demands we treat our bodies differently than the way everybody else without Christ treats their bodies. The problem in the Corinthian church was that the cross hadn't changed the way they were treating their bodies. Look at [verse 20](#). Verse 20 is the verse that governs the entire passage. All that Paul says about the body is based here. Read it out loud with me. *You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.* Something happened at the cross that makes the way we treat and view our bodies different than the rest of the world. We were bought. For those who have come to Christ by faith in his blood at the cross, a transaction occurred. When you become a Christian you don't just receive stuff, gimme, gimme, take, take, take. In exchange for receiving the righteousness of Christ and forgiveness and mercy and eternal life you give up something. You give up the rights to your life which includes the rights to your body. You aren't a free agent anymore. You're under contract. God owns you. Therefore, we're called to honor God, or as the text literally reads, *glorify God with your body.*

Transition

But what does that mean? What does it mean to glorify God with your body? What does it mean when you hear the alarm clock go off in the morning? What does it mean when you step on the scale? What does it mean when you sit in front of the TV? What does it mean when you sit down to a meal? What does it mean when you surf the internet? Let me try to summarize for you what this means. These are [John Piper's](#) words, not mine.

Proposition

- **Glorifying God with your body "means using your body in such a way that it becomes clear that God is more precious and more satisfying than all bodily cravings."¹**
- Just think about that for a second. Glorifying God with your body "means using your body in such a way that it becomes clear that God is more precious and more satisfying than all bodily cravings." The cross demands we treat our bodies differently than the way everybody else without Christ treats their bodies. The way we do that is by glorifying God with our bodies. What does that look like? **It means that God must be more precious and more satisfying to us than all our bodily cravings.** If you can't say no to your bodily cravings, whether that urge is for food or sex or caffeine or thinness or sleep or pleasure or nicotine or alcohol or comfort then it's not just a bad habit that needs to be forgiven. As a Christian, those are signs of a major, systemic cross-deficiency.

Transition

This passage answers one simple question: How should Christians treat their bodies? What difference does the cross make to your body? If God has in fact plucked us from the culture by the power of the cross, to make us different, then everything changes including how you and I treat our bodies.

Organizational Sentence

- **In this passage Paul gives three corrections about our bodies that, I think, will help us glorify God with our bodies**

Transition

If you're taking notes write these down. From [verses 12-14](#), correction one. **The body matters.** From [verses 15-17](#), correction two. **There are spiritual implications to what we do or don't do to our bodies.** And from [verses 18-20](#), correction three. **We don't have the right to do whatever we want to our bodies.** We'll take them one at a time. Look at verses 12-14. *"Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"--but God will destroy them both. The body 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.*

Main Points

- Our bodies matter. God is not anti-body. He's for the body. [Verse 13](#). *The body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body.* Did you know your body is important to God? Some of you here hate your bodies and have for years. But God is for all bodies and he's for your

¹ John Piper's Sermon, "You Were Bought With a Price," 11.22.92.

body. God doesn't just care about what happens to your spirit. God cares about the body. And because the body matters to God what you do to your body matters to God.

- Some things just aren't good for bodies. Eating a whole bag of Oreo cookies at one sitting is not good for your body. Not exercising is bad for your body. The Corinthians had their own issues. They had the false notion that as Christians the body didn't really matter. Since the body was irrelevant have fun, live it up, carpe diem, do whatever you want. We know from [verse 16](#) that for the Corinthians this meant visiting prostitutes. They even had several slogans to justify this laissez-faire behavior. [Verse 12](#). *Everything is permissible for me. Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.* In other words, since the body doesn't matter and God's going to destroy it in the end, therefore, I can do whatever I want to it. But Paul says no, he corrects them. As Christians, you can't do whatever you want to your body because death is not the end of the body for the Christian. Christianity is an embodied religion. Bodies matter. Why? The cross. The cross changes everything. Look at [verse 14](#). *By his power God raised Christ from the dead bringing his body to life and he will one day raise the Christian's body too.* Because of the cross and resurrection bodies matter. And by application, what you then do to your body matters.
- How do you know if and when you're mistreating your body? Obviously, there are certain things that are simply not appropriate for bodies that have been bought and purchased by the blood of Christ. Sexual immorality is one of them. [Verse 13](#). *The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord.* Earlier I said this may be the most important passage in 1 Corinthians. I said that because there is no bigger turtle in the road for the church than this one. More than any other issue the church has lost its distinctiveness, its saltiness, its light because of this issue.
 - 42% percent of Americans describe themselves as sexually adventurous
 - 29% have sex on a first date
 - The average number of sexual partners men have in a lifetime—20
 - Average number of sexual partners women have in a lifetime—6
 - 11 million adults visit pornographic websites in a typical week
 - 20% of adults view magazines, movies, or videos containing sexual images every week
 - Each week 26 million adults have sexual encounters with someone other than their spouse
 - 65% of teens have had sex by the time they finish high school
 - On average there are 6.7 sexual scenes per hour of television that teens are most likely to watch
 - In fact 70% o all television shows feature some sexual content²
- The opportunities to feed our bodily cravings through new technologies are growing exponentially. We're inventing new ways to sin with our bodies. And it's only going to get worse. "Bus passengers in Bulgaria's capital are being shown soft-core porn films on giant video screens at night. During the day, the plasma screens in Sofia station show bus times but the night shift now shows porn films. A spokesman for the bus-station management said: "We wanted to give the passengers something to take their minds off the cold and to pass the

² Leadership Journal (Winter 2006), pg. 35.

time while waiting for a bus and there are unlikely to be children around that time of night."³

- Children aren't immune either. This is staggering to me. The [Justice Department](#) estimates that 9 of 10 children between the ages of 8 and 16 have been exposed to pornography online. Software company Symantec found that 47 percent of school-age children receive pornographic spam on a daily basis. And representatives from the pornography industry told Congress's COPA (Child Online Protection Act) Commission that as much as 20 to 30 percent of the traffic to some pornographic websites is children.⁴
- Listen to me. You cannot glorify God with your body if you are trapped in sexual immorality. Some of you here this morning are playing with fire. Listen to me very carefully. I understand the shame and guilt associated with these kinds of sexual sins. It's awful. If you've blown it know God's grace and mercy and forgiveness are freely given through the cross of Christ. If you come to the cross and renounce and reject your sexual sins God will mend your brokenness. Remember, you were washed, sanctified, justified in the name of Christ and by the Spirit. By faith, get back on the horse and serve God with your body—you're body is meant for the Lord.
- However, for those of you who repeatedly give in to your urges, if this saying "yes" to your bodily cravings has become part of your character, do you realize what's at stake? *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?* If you continually, repeatedly surrender to the god in the belly you will forfeit your eternal inheritance. The cross demands you treat your body differently.
- And its not just lust and sexual immorality that's the issue here. It's all our bodily cravings. Christians aren't supposed to be mastered by anything, [verse 12](#). If something, anything, coffee, sleep, cigarettes, laziness, alcohol, chocolate, has gripped you so that you can't say no to the urge when that urge seeks to overwhelm you—that's the issue here. With the help of the Holy Spirit those desires must be brought into submission. You must not let them rule you. The way of the cross demands self-denial and self-sacrifice. You must not allow yourself to become mastered by your desires. That's called slavery. Every action you contemplate should be tested by two questions: "Is it beneficial?" and "Will it overpower and enslave me?" You can only serve one master. At all cost, keep your freedom not to sin that comes through Christ.

Transition

I'm convinced the reason we have so much confusion and so many problems with our bodies, especially in this area of sexual morality, is because we don't really understand how connected our bodies and spirits are. The reason death is so awful is because through death the body is torn from the spirit. We are not meant to live life apart from a body. The two are intricately connected. Each affects the other. That's the second correction Paul addresses in [verses 15-17](#). **There are profound spiritual implications to what we do or don't do to our bodies.** Listen. *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*

³ MSNBC.com Dated 2/16/07

⁴ Daniel Weiss, "Obscenity Enforcement, Corporate Participation, and Violence against Women and Children," family.org (7-23-05); submitted by Aaron Goerner to www.preachingtoday.com

with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

- For some reason, the Corinthians believed there was no connection between being spiritual and how they treated their bodies. Paul says otherwise. He corrects them. Being spiritual has everything to do with how you treat your body.
- I still can't get over the magnitude of what [verses 15](#) and [17](#) say. *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?* Just think for a second about what these verses say? There is incredible dignity in having a human body, especially if you're a Christian. Christians are Christ's body parts. If you are a Christian you are Christ's hands and his eyes and his feet and his legs and his fingers and his toes and his arms in this world. Your body is his body. What an awesome privilege. But more than being just one flesh with Christ. If you are a Christian, you're one spirit with him. [Verse 17](#). *But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.* How is this possible? I don't know if I'll ever fully understand what it means to be united to Christ in Spirit. But what is clear is this idea of oneness and intimacy and fellowship and sharing. Is that coming through clearly? Obviously, if you're a Christian, to become one with something other than Christ perverts this oneness principle.
- In my junior year of college, for one of my history classes, I purchased a brand new copy of Roland Bainton's classic biography of [Martin Luther](#) called *Here I Stand*. A book I highly recommend by the way. I went back to my apartment, opened the book and found that, as part of this book on this great Protestant Reformer, there was bound a section of a pornographic book. For those of you who are wondering, I did return it without reading it. Here's the point. Joined together, as if the two were one, were two books that didn't belong together. The outside cover looked okay. But the inside was corrupted.
- And that's Paul's point in these verses. Sex is more than just hooking up. There's no such thing as casual sex. MTV is wrong. Not all bodily urges are the same. There is a spiritual component to sex. The reason sex outside of marriage and sexual immorality are so dangerously wrong is because in those acts spirit and flesh are united. Eating doesn't do that. Drinking doesn't do that. Yes, there is a spiritual component to all of life—eating and drinking. But only sex involves the whole person. Body and spirit.
- If we're going to glorify God with our bodies we are going to have to mature in our thinking to the point that we realize there is a spiritual component to everything we do. 1 Corinthians 10:31, right? *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* Your work is a spiritual exercise. Your meals are a spiritual exercise. Your recreation is a spiritual exercise. There is a spiritual component to everything you do.

Transition

Which brings us to the third correction. We can't do whatever we want to our bodies. **We don't have the right to do whatever we want to our bodies.** [Verses 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. 19 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; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

- I've already said it once, I'll say it again. If you are a Christian, you don't own your body. *You are not your own, verse 19. You were bought at a price.* And because you've been purchased your body now has a new purpose. It's become a temple, the dwelling place for God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives inside the Christian. He takes up residence there. Therefore, treat your body in a way that's deserving of this honor. *Flee sexual immorality.* Run from it.
- I'm not sure where this story came from. It was passed on to me by my dad. Story goes a woman was watching her children and the neighbor kids from the kitchen window. They're playing in the yard. Nothing's unusual about their behavior until she notices them standing in a circle. Once she can see what they're doing she's shocked. The kids are playing with a litter of baby skunks. As any mother would do, she runs outside yells at the kids "run." And each of the kids reaches down, picks up a baby skunk and starts running.
- When God says flee from sexual immorality some of you have picked up the skunk to run. You're polluting your whole life. Drop the skunk. I love how one commentator put it. "The reason God calls us to chastity or purity is not so that we don't get Aids. It's not so that we don't get pregnant or get caught."⁵ Teens did you know that? Ultimately, the reason why your parents don't want you having sex before marriage is not because of STDs and pregnancy. The reason why those things are inappropriate is because God has purchased you with the blood of Christ. He owns your body. He's bought you for chastity, for purity, for his glory. I hate to quote [John Piper](#) again but he's right on. "When God bought you he didn't buy a worker he bought a dwelling place. He bought us as treasure chests for the treasure of God." You are God's treasure chest. Fill yourself with the treasure of Him not the refuse of this world.
- If we are going to glorify God with our bodies we're going to have to take verses like Colossians 3:5 more seriously. *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.* That may mean getting rid of your computer—forever. It may mean disconnecting the satellite. It may mean ending the subscription. Kill it. Put it to death. Cut off the line of supply. In order for your appetite for God to grow greater than your appetite for sin you're going to have to starve yourself until the old, sinful flesh wastes away and dies. Does it matter how we treat our bodies? You bet. Our eternal destinies depend on it.

Conclusion

- Do you remember the sad story of Esau? Jacob's brother? He couldn't control his bodily appetites. The New Testament in Hebrews 12:16 calls Esau godless. Why? Listen. *See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.* Godless Esau forfeited his birthright as the firstborn to feed the cravings of his belly. His appetite was his god. **Glorifying God with your body "means using your body in such a way that it becomes clear that God is more precious and more satisfying than all bodily cravings."**⁶

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- If you're serious about worshiping and glorifying God with your body then something radical needs to happen. And now's the time. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that *in view of God's mercy, we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is our spiritual act of worship...*