



Central Peninsula Church

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1 Corinthians 6:12-20
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It's Just Sex!

SERIES: *Sex, Marriage & Singleness from God's Point of View*

I'm starting a four week series on Sex, Marriage and Singleness. My text for this series will be 1 Cor. 6:12-7:40 where Paul addresses the church at Corinth on these very issues. I've chosen one word to summarize the theme of each of these messages. This morning I'll address the subject of why our sexuality is so important and the key word here is PURITY. Next week I'll talk about the role of sex within marriage and the key word will be INTIMACY. In two weeks I'll speak about why married couples ought to stay married and the key word is FIDELITY. Finally, in three weeks, we'll look at some of the realities and benefits of being single and the key word will be CELIBACY.

I don't think I have to tell you that these relevant issues for us today. The video we just saw sums up the prevailing attitude pretty well: "It's just sex." That's why in a recent survey 29% said they've had sex on a first date. Men have had an average of 20 sexual partners in a lifetime while women average 6. Eleven million adults said they visit adult-only web sites in a typical week. 65% of teenagers have had sex by the time they finish high school. Almost 4 in 10 babies born in the United States are born out of wedlock.

We even have something new in the greeting card industry. The Secret Lover Collection is "committed to providing a greeting card collection with empathy and understanding, without judgment, to lovers involved in a secret relationship." The founder says she launched it to help the unfaithful "express their emotions" and to cash in, since there's a huge market. How do you market greeting cards for the unfaithful? Very subtly. Cards will be displayed under labels like, "Love Expressions," and "Intimacy." Card messages include slogans like, "I used to look forward to the weekends, but since we met they seem like an eternity." And for holidays, "As we each celebrate with our families, I'll be thinking of you."

But, "It's just sex." And this mindset isn't unique to our own age. Two thousand years ago, Corinth was a city with a warped view of sex. Every day hundreds of priestesses from the temple of Aphrodite which stood atop the city would come down into the streets and ply their trade. Sex was offered as a way of worship. And sexual immorality had crept into the church. Many within the church at Corinth began to rethink what Paul had previously taught them, which is very simply that God designed sex to be enjoyed within the lifelong covenant of marriage. Just as many do today, they began to

rationalize: "Well, it's okay if we fool around a little. We plan on getting married someday." Or "It's only natural."

In chapter 6:12-20 Paul takes these folks on. And the first thing he does is confront some of their rationalizations. What's amazing is that these are some of the very same arguments people use today.

I. Paul deals with two arguments justifying immorality.

A. "Immorality is okay because we are under grace": Look first at v.12. "**All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.**" There should be quotation marks around this phrase, "all things are lawful for me." Paul is quoting a favorite slogan of the Corinthians that they used to justify immorality: "all things are lawful for me." They were saying that since as Christians we're saved by grace apart from any works, and we're freed up from having to keep the law of Moses to be right with God, we can do anything we want. What's scary about this argument is that there's an element of truth in it. No doubt Paul himself had taught them that we ARE free from the law of Moses. But they had taken that teaching to an extreme and said that since Christ died for our sins and we're forgiven, we can go out and indulge all of our passions and it won't affect our relationship with God.

I hear that kind of thing from time to time today. church like ours is especially susceptible to this kind of thinking because we emphasize our freedom in Christ so much, we refuse to make rules out of things that the Scripture doesn't make rules out of. But we need to be careful that in reacting to legalism we don't go to the other extreme.

Notice how Paul answers this argument that "all things are lawful for me." He doesn't disagree with the statement; he doesn't resort to a new form of legalism and set up all kinds of rules. But rather he sets up two guidelines to follow in using our freedom in Christ. *First, he says all things are lawful but not all things are profitable.* Before we do something we have to ask ourselves, is this profitable? Is it helpful? The moment our freedom is used in such a way that it tears other people down, then something's wrong. Our freedom was meant to allow us to serve other people, not to hurt them.

I wonder if the Corinthians were thinking about the lives of those young ladies that came down into the streets of Corinth when they exercised their Christian freedom? How many men really think about the young women on the

computer screen when they watch pornography? That's someone's daughter. Immorality tears people down. That's why in the scripture sexual immorality is always placed side by side with greed and selfishness because the focus is on ourselves. What often is done in the name of love is actually done for self gratification and that's twisting the very purpose of sex. The first question to ask is, is it profitable?

The second question to ask is, is it enslaving? "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." As I exercise my freedom in Christ, will I become enslaved to that very thing that I'm doing? Will it end up ruling my life? Will it end up to be an addiction in my life? This is especially important when we're talking about things that pertain to the body such as sex, because we all know that the body has a tendency to develop dependencies on certain things. And when it does, we become a slave to whatever that thing is. Isn't it ironic that in the name of Christian freedom we can actually become slaves of the very things we claim we can do because of our freedom? So, ask, is it enslaving?

B. "Immorality is okay because it is natural": After dealing with that argument, Paul deals with another one in vv.13-14. **"Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power."** Once again Paul quotes from a favorite slogan of the Corinthians: "food is for the stomach and stomach is for food." Again there ought to be quotation marks around that phrase.

Paul hasn't changed subjects here from sex to eating. He quotes this because this was another rationale the Corinthians used to justify their own immorality. They were saying that sex is just like eating: "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food. In the same way, sex is for the body, and the body is for sex. Just as we have a natural and God-given need to satiate our stomach with food, so it is with sex. When we get hungry and head for the refrigerator, no one hauls us into court and charges us with immorality. Why should it be any different with sex? Why object to something that is perfectly natural and God-given?"

Surely you've heard this one. But here we come face to face with a very important truth. The world, regardless of all the emphasis it places on it, has a very low view of sex. Christians have a higher view of sex than people in the world do. The world sees sex simply as another bodily function akin to eating. There's nothing special about it, nothing unique, nothing worth protecting. But as we'll see shortly the biblical view of sex is that it touches us

and affects us at a much deeper level than eating does. It's something that involves not just our physical body but our soul and our spirit as well. And that's what Paul gets at in his response. He says, "Yes, food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food. I don't disagree with that." But then he says, "God will destroy them both." In other words, "Although it's true what you say about the stomach and food, all that's just temporary. God will do away with both. But sex involves something altogether different for a couple of reasons. First, while the stomach is made for food the body wasn't made for immorality; it was made for the Lord; our sexuality was made to be fulfilled in a way that honors and glorifies the Lord.

Not only that, but while food and the stomach will be done away with, our bodies will be raised up with Christ. Sex involves the body and the body isn't temporary. You might say that our bodies were not made for immorality but rather for immortality. So the implication is that what we do with our bodies is very important because they belong in a unique relationship with God that will last throughout eternity. When you think what you're going to do with your body, do you consider that?

In the rest of the passage, Paul expands on this idea of how our physical selves (bodies) are connected to our spiritual selves. He wants us to see how this has direct bearing on our sexuality. He's going to tell us three things that we may have forgotten about our bodies.

II. Our physical selves are tied to our spiritual selves (vv.15-20).

A. Our bodies are members of Christ: Look at v.15. **"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!"** Notice the sentence begins with the phrase, "do you not know." He asks that again in v.16 and in v.19. He's saying, "You know this, I've taught you this, but you're not living by this, so let me remind you about it." This is how it is so often. We know better, but for one reason or another we choose not to live by what we know. So we need reminders; people to keep us accountable to live by what we know. Do you have someone like that in your life? Someone to ask you the hard questions?

The first thing we need to be reminded of is that our bodies are members of Christ. Our bodies are intimately connected with Christ, so much so that they're members of his body. And as members of his body we're obligated to serve him and do as he pleases. My hands are part of my body. They're obligated to do what I tell them to do. I give the orders for my hands. They're connected to me. Why would I take my members and use them, for example, to beat myself up? In the same way, when we engage in immorality we take the members of Christ and use them in a way that damages him. How can we do that? May it never be!

We're warned here about compartmentalizing lives. We think we can be involved in immorality with our bodies and somehow have it not affect our relationship with God. No wonder we have so many fragmented people. We think we can isolate this one area of our lives, our sexuality, from our relationship with Christ. We pray, we go to church, we read the Bible, we do all those things, but in this one area of our lives, we think we can do what we want; it won't infringe on our relationship with God. But that's impossible because our bodies are members of Christ.

B. Our bodies are one spirit with the Lord: Part of the reason we can't do that is found in vv.16-17. **"Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, 'THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.' But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him."** This is the second thing that we need to be reminded of—what actually happens when we engage in sex with someone. When we engage in sex we become one body with that person. That's why he goes all the way back to Genesis 3 and quotes, "The two shall become one flesh." He goes back to the first love story and marriage where Adam and Eve are encouraged to enjoy one another and to multiply and to be fruitful. The whole purpose for this is that the two would become one flesh.

This gives us great insight into the nature and purpose of sex. Sex is an act that unites two people in a one flesh relationship. The idea here is that a permanent bond is created. This word "joins" in v.16 literally was used in Greek to refer to glue. When two people come together that way they're glued together. Woodworkers will tell you that Elmer's Wood Glue is the greatest invention ever! If you apply that wood glue properly, the bond that's created is actually stronger and harder to break than the wood itself. If you try to break that bond you can't do so without doing great damage to both pieces of wood.

See what Paul's saying? He's saying the sexual union is like that. That's what it does. It unites us, not just in body, but in soul as well. Sex, whether we realize it or not, acts like glue in a relationship. C.S. Lewis once said: "Each time a man and a woman enter into a sexual relationship, a spiritual bond is established between them that must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured." We talk about safe sex, but you can't put a condom on your heart.

Sex is far more than just a physical act. It's an act that involves the whole person—body and soul. There is no such thing as casual sex. Don't ever buy that lie. It's an act where forces are at work that are completely out of our control. Something mysterious, something very deep takes place in this union. This is why the word of God absolutely insists that sex be practiced within the covenant of marriage. Sex is a life-uniting act and to do it justice it has to be experienced in the context of a lifelong union, and that always means marriage. Within that context sex is a wonderful, beautiful, expression of intimacy and

vulnerability that should be celebrated, given thanks for. All the masks are taken off and there's no fear of rejection, no fear of abandonment, no fear of "will he call me tomorrow or not?"

Though it might be enjoyed on a certain level, the end result of immorality is a sense of hollowness, frustration, and aloneness. And for those who are believers it even has a greater impact. Look at v.17, **"The one who joins himself (there's that word again—the glue word) with the Lord is one spirit with him."** Just as two people joined in sex are one flesh, so those of us who have come into a personal relationship with the Lord are joined with him. Our spirit has been glued with the Lord's spirit. So, once again, when you engage in any kind of immorality, you're actually implicating the Lord Jesus Christ in the same act. You're united with him. You're one spirit with him. You can't separate your spirit from your body, and so you are involving the Lord himself in this act.

C. Our bodies are the dwelling place of God: The third thing we need to be reminded of is in vv.18-20. **"Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."** Notice that sexual sin is unique. Don't let anybody ever tell you that sexual sin is like any other sin because that's a lie. It's true that God is willing to forgive all sin alike, but Paul says sexual sin is unique and different from all other sins in that it constitutes a sin against the body. What does that mean? Other sins that involve the body—chemical addiction, gluttony—will both eventually destroy the body. Why is immorality unique in this regard? The key is that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and immorality violates the Spirit's presence in the body in a way that these other things don't. God himself lives in us. And for that to happen, our bodies had to be bought at a very high price, with the blood of Christ, by the Lord himself. What is the temple of the Lord for? It's for worship.

I like what John McArthur says about this verse. He says, "Could you imagine committing sexual immorality in this church sanctuary?" Could you imagine that? No way. But that's no worse than what happens every time a believer is involved in immorality because our bodies are the sanctuary of God. God owns them. God dwells there. This is his residence if we're believers.

III. We should flee from immorality and glorify God.

A. We should flee immorality: So what do we do with all of this? There are two commands in this

passage. The first comes at the very beginning of v.18. He says: **“Flee immorality.”** He doesn’t say to stop immorality. He uses much stronger words—flee from it, run as far away as possible from it. I like what Wayne Wright says: “The best companion against immorality is geography.” In other words, get as far away as possible. Our sexual urges are so great and so powerful that we can’t afford to hang in there and duke it out with temptation because if we do, we’re going to lose. It’s inevitable. Sooner or later you’re going to lose that battle if you don’t flee from it, if you don’t run as far away as you can. Essentially, we must get out of the situation, whatever it is, that might lead us into immorality.

I talk to engaged couples all the time about this stuff. I tell engaged couples who come to me for premarital counseling that I expect them to be pure before marriage, and if they aren’t being pure they have to start being pure or I won’t marry them. And that includes not living together, not sleeping together, and not fooling around. One of the things that couples fail to realize is that you can have sex without having sex. You can violate all of these things and justify it because you’re not having intercourse and “after all, we are getting married soon.” I don’t buy it. But I get couples all the time who tell me that they can play around with fire and not get burned. But I say you should run as far away from the fire as possible. You should decide on what situations you will NOT allow yourself to get into.

For some this might mean getting out of relationship altogether. If there’s been a pattern of immorality in that relationship, chances are you’re not going to be able to change that. The best thing to do is just get out of there, flee from it completely. Don’t even let yourself stay in that situation because you know what happens when you do.

One of the ways we can flee immorality is to be very careful with the kind of things that we allow ourselves to be exposed to. If we’re feeding the flesh in the kind of books we read, the kind of movies we watch, the kind of web sites we visit, then we’re just setting ourselves up for failure in this area. So fleeing immorality means that we stay away or at least set up filters and systems of accountability. It means being careful about what we allow our minds to be exposed to.

B. We should glorify God with our bodies: But there is a second command. The first is negative, but this second is positive. In v.20 he says, **“glorify God in your body.”** Everything Paul has said up until now has been leading up to this. Why should we glorify God in

our bodies? Because you can’t separate your physical selves from your spiritual selves. As we’ve seen, your body is not temporary; it’s eternal; it will be raised us as Christ was raised up. Your body is a member of Christ. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Your body has been purchased by God with the precious blood of his Son. Don’t take that body and drag it through the mud! Instead, glorify God with it.

CONCLUSION

I want to say something to those of you who’ve come out of a background of sexual immorality. If I were to ask people here to raise their hands if they had come out of this background I know that most of us, myself included, would raise their hands. It’s very important that you understand this morning that there is forgiveness and healing available for you. Most of the Corinthians had come out of that background as well. Look what Paul says to them in vv.9-11, **“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”**

If you’re in Christ today, you need to see yourself as washed and sanctified (made holy) and justified. It would be easy to take what I’ve said and to think that you’ve been marked and spiritually destroyed because of this. “I can never enjoy a healthy relationship with a marriage partner because of the things I’ve done.” And a lot of Christians walk around in a perpetual state of guilt over what they’ve done in the past in this area. I want you to know that forgiveness and healing is available in Jesus. I think of how Jesus treated the woman caught in adultery in John 8. He didn’t condemn her; he loved her and he protected her and he set her free to live a life of obedience.

But if you’re presently involved in an immoral relationship, or if you’re playing around with pornography, let me encourage you to deal with it today. Stop rationalizing. You know it’s wrong. If you’re a believer, you know that you’re ripping yourself apart. You’re defiling the temple of God! You’re not paralyzed. You can change. It’s going to be painful, but it’s going to be a lot more painful eventually to continue on. Do as Paul said: Flee immorality and glorify God in your body.

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