

WHY SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS WRONG

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

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1 Corinthians 6:12–20 (NIV)

“Everything is permissible for me’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible for me’—but I will not be mastered by anything. ‘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. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 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! 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.’ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 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; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

Sexual immorality is not new at all. What is new about American society is our attitude toward sexual immorality. An increasing permissiveness has marked our culture for the past two decades.

I was reading, this last week, in the *LA Times* the “Dear Abby” column. She had a letter from a woman who was lamenting the fact that she had not become involved in an illicit relationship outside of marriage. She quotes a poem that she had lived by and she reflects that no longer does she wish to live by this poem. The poem went something like this: “When I met him, I liked him;

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when I liked him, I loved him; when I loved him I let him; when I let him, I lost him.” She said that living with that poem, she had never let anyone, but now she regrets that, because she had lost meaningful relationships. She writes “Dear Abby” to see what Abby will say.

I want you to know that there is a great deal of difference between “Dear Abby” and “Dear Paul” on this same matter. She said, “Have no regrets for not letting yourself be used. Regret only having passed up a mature love relationship. Playing instead that childish game of holding out, thinking that was the way to get a man. I don’t know your age, but you are never too old for a sexual relationship if you want one.”

Perhaps it could be debated as to whether or not immorality is on the rise. But what can’t be debated anymore is the fact that the effects of immorality are more visible than ever. Especially the effects of persons such as “Dear Abby,” giving in effect her stamp of approval upon a relationship as long as it is mature and meaningful. The evidence of immorality is manifested in other ways: couples living together without marriage. The rise of the homosexual rights movement. The occurrence of adultery and divorce, with all the consequences associated with that. Rights without responsibilities. Growth of venereal disease. Abortion. Parentless children. The relentless sexual stimulation from the media. Whenever this is going on in a culture, Christians in that culture have to decide whether they’re going to go with the culture or with Christ. It’s simply that kind of a choice.

The people to whom Paul wrote had to decide whether they were going to be on this matter of sexual morality, whether they were going to be Corinthians or Christians. Abstinence from sexual immorality now requires as much commitment as it did back in Corinth. We somehow at times live with the illusion that in the old days before all the ads and the hype and the pornography and the like that somehow people did not have the pressure toward sexual

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temptation that is in our culture. But a Corinthian citizen did not have to look in the newspaper ads or the yellow pages for ads for massage parlors. He only had to go to the highest point in town, the Temple of Aphrodite where a thousand priestess-prostitutes openly practiced their professions. The Corinthians were coming out of this kind of culture. Many of them after coming to Christ were sliding back into the culture and practicing sexual immorality.

Paul here, as he does throughout the Corinthian letter, addresses this practical problem as well as other problems. His intention was as much “How can we remain moral in an immoral society?” as, “What is wrong with sexual immorality anyway?”

There are several things that Paul says about what is wrong with sexual immorality.

The first thing he says is one that has been well-known and well-illustrated as a response to sexual immorality for a long time. The rest of Paul’s arguments, I think, you’re going to find new. This is because most messages that I have heard dealing with sexual immorality—and there have been very, very few, because it’s a subject that people somehow don’t like to touch on in the pulpit; isn’t it great that the Word of God touches all areas that we’re skittish about?—simply have not brought these arguments up.

I. In verse 12, Paul advances the first reason why sexual immorality is wrong: It leads to hurt and bondage.

He is evidently quoting a line from the liberal party at Corinth. That is the group of Christians that were saying, “Do anything you want.” Perhaps they’re basing their slogan upon what the Lord said when He indicated that all things were clean. And they’re reflecting upon the grace of God and arriving at an attitude of radical grace, “Sin all you please in order to show how great a forgiving God really is.” Their slogan was—and it’s in quotes in the modern translations—“Everything is permissible for me. Everything is allowed to me.” Paul’s thought rebuts that by

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saying, “Not everything is beneficial and I will not be mastered by anything.” He is saying in this phrase that sexual immorality does lead to hurt and bondage. That it is not beneficial and that, if one yields to it, one winds up becoming mastered by it.

This is the exact opposite of what we expect when we first encounter temptations of sexual immorality. The nature of the temptation of sexual immorality, I think, is the most deceitful temptation that a human being can face, because it seems to be so right, and the emotions seem to lead toward it. Yet the exact opposite of it ensues in a relationship.

I think maybe a way to illustrate it is: When we were kids, one day my brother took this bright, shiny red apple. It looked so good that he chomped right into it. After he’d been chewing a while, he looked back at the apple, and there half of a worm still in the apple. Looking at the outside of the apple, one had no idea that this loathsome creature existed within it.

Perhaps that is a good analogy of sexual immorality. Sexual immorality looks so right. Yet inside, it has its gruesome and odious aspects.

C. S. Lewis has warned us that Satan always sends to us error in opposites or in pairs. You’ll find, for example at Corinth, there were those who were saying, “Everything is permissible for me,” and others in chapter 7 who were saying that sexual union, even within marriage, was to be abstained from. Here Paul is dealing with this matter of the Corinthians saying, “All things are permitted” and saying, “No, that’s going to bring harm and bondage.”

How do we relate what Paul is saying here to today’s philosophy about bringing hurt and bondage? Because certainly the Playboy philosophy is one that says that one participates in sexual immorality for mutual enjoyment. That there is no hurt or bondage. That one is to be free from puritanical and church hang-ups. Someone has said—I think rightly—in regard to that, that there is a profound difference between someone who breaks the rules and someone who does not

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accept the rules. One is a transgressor and the other is a revolutionary. What we have on our hands is a revolutionary view of immorality, which simply says that to be immoral is, in fact, not to be immoral at all, but to simply enjoy oneself. Hugh Hefner says “It’s quite possible for a sexual relationship to be rather casual, but still be quite moral, because how we define morality is what serves the best interest of man.” In other words, morality is whatever I like. Whatever makes me feel good. That’s moral.

How do we, then, say that sexual immorality leads to hurt and bondage when there’s such a tremendous media blitz in our day that says the opposite is true? If you get married and you settle down and you have children, you’re going to get a hum-drum life and everything’s going to become drab. That’s where the bondage is. The people that are free and exciting and enjoying life are the people who haven’t made that kind of covenant commitment.

We have to derive the fundamental perception of this matter from the Scripture itself, from God’s Word. God’s Word, then, works through human experience. First, striking what the root meaning of the word “immorality” is in the Greek. It is the word *porne*, from which we derive “pornography,” for example. “Pornography” is just a combination of two Greek words which means “fornication writing.” *Porne* means, in all of its forms, “sexual immorality.” Its root meaning is “to sell.” That’s a kind of unusual meaning for immorality. What do I mean that the root means “to sell”? The word in the Greek usage first came to describe someone who was sold for sexual purposes. Namely, a harlot. Greek harlots were usually bought slaves. The word came to be applied to them. They were *porne*.

The word later began to be applied to all forms of sexual immorality. Its root idea, at the very base of the idea of the word *porne*, is the concept of someone who is in bondage, making themselves sexually available to another person.

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That concept of bondage in a sexual relationship outside of marriage is a cardinal tenet of Christian faith and commitment. We know, from looking at our day, that regardless of what we are told by situational ethicists and by the Playboy philosophy, that indeed sexual immorality does have its cost. It has its high cost physically, in the amount of unwanted pregnancies in this country. In the fact, for example, that last year, in the United States of America, in 1979, three out of every ten pregnancies in America ended in abortion. There are those who attempt to say that sexual immorality does not have costs and the fear of pregnancy has been removed in our culture. The statistics belie that completely. What we have in our day are persons who have permissively engaged in sex and then wound up killing the child in their own womb. A kind of inhumanity that is unspeakable.

The rise of venereal disease also gives indication that sexual freedom has the bondage aspect. But it's more than physical bondage that sexual immorality leads to. Psychologically, it leads to bondage and hurt. I admit that there are differing degrees of this in different people. As the Scripture says, some sins show up before judgment and some sins afterwards. Some people can go on sinning as though their conscience isn't plagued at all. Others can be very sensitive to God. Sexual immorality—as I have seen it, in terms of sharing with people and helping them as they have sought to come out of sexual immorality—brings, for example, depression, guilt, and so often, a flight from responsibility. A flight from meaningful relationships. Because sexual immorality leads to such self-seeking, that it cannot settle down and enjoy a sustained, meaningful covenant relationship with another individual nor maintain personal purity in life. Donald Strobe, in his sermon on Christ and the Playboy philosophy, reminds us of the fact that the Playboy philosophy indeed leads to psychological bondage. He gives this amazing statement “It is significant that Playboy’s first Playmate was Marilyn Monroe. A nude picture that Hugh

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Hefner purchased for three hundred dollars to start his magazine in 1953. We all remember her tragic end, when she took her own life because, as she said so many times, ‘I’ve never felt like a person, only an object.’” How incredible! I think, from time to time, we, on the Christian end of things, ought to remind Hugh Hefner and the Playboy end of things that the first Playmate is a living illustration of the bankruptcy of Playboy’s philosophy. Here is a person who, tired of being used as an object, commits suicide. Sex without covenant love is dehumanizing. It is injurious, psychologically, and most of all, it is terrible, spiritually.

A person in a position of sexual immorality cannot enjoy a spiritual relationship with God.

David, in Psalm 51:3, says this so very explicitly after his sin with Bathsheba, when he cries out to God, “My sin is always before You.” He recognizes that, as long as that sin went unconfessed and undealt with, it was ever-present before God.

Paul here is saying, in this passage, “You can take liberty to such a point that you lose it.”

Therefore, first of all, he is saying a line that we know well to the Corinthians, “Sexual immorality does lead to bondage and to hurt. All things are not convenient.”

II. The second thing that he says in respect to what is wrong with sexual immorality is this:

The body is not meant for immorality at all, but for the Lord.

Paul, here again, is confronting a slogan that is being used among some of the Corinthian believers, who were pleasure lovers. He is using a phrase which evidently they used, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.” The analogy is this: The stomach is made for food and food was made for the stomach. Therefore, both ought to enjoy one another. That line was evidently carried further by members of the Corinthian congregation in saying, “If the food is made for the stomach and the stomach or the food, then the body was made for sex and sex was

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made for the body.” It is in the same category as the stomach. God doesn’t really care what you eat. Neither does He care how you indulge your body in a sexual way.

Paul says, “There’s something wrong with that kind of logic.” Here’s what He says about the logic—it’s an incredible line, I’ve found tremendous spiritual enrichment as I have looked at what Paul said about the meaning of the Christian’s body—the first thing he says is “God has no permanent place for the belly,” to use the vernacular of the word “stomach.” The word in the Greek here is actually “digestive intestines.” “Food for the digestive intestines and digestive intestines for food.” He’s saying to the Corinthians, “You’re right, the stomach is made for food and food is made for the stomach, I’ll agree with that. But you must realize that God has no permanent purpose for the stomach. No permanent purpose for the belly. It’s not part of His program for the resurrection of the dead. God has some means that He has for the resurrection life, for sustaining our life, other than eating cows or whatever. He’s going to have some way of sustaining the life.

So the belly is a temporary organ. Thank God it is. Some of you are wishing you could make it more temporary than it is right now and reduce the size of it. Thank God that He has no permanent plans for the belly.

Because God has no permanent plans for it, in a certain sense, God doesn’t care what you eat.

That cannot be taken as the liberty party would and say, “It’s ok to indulge in any sort of way.”

The point that Paul is making is that God doesn’t really care whether you eat cauliflower or spinach or carrots. He doesn’t care whether you eat crocodile meat or lamb or stew. It’s immaterial. The food is not the important point. It’s passing away and the belly is passing away.

God has no permanent plans for it.

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But he says, “God does have a permanent plan for the body.” Paul here, then, makes between the lines a significant statement about human sexuality. He says that human sexuality is not part of God’s passing plan. That, somehow, when He created us as individuals, He stamped into our nature a sexual identity, which is meant to be forever part of our nature. One must realize there’s a lot of silence about this in Scripture, since the Lord has indicated that in heaven we will be as the angels. Part of His creative hand is to make us in His own image. Paul says that God does have a permanent plan for the body and an argument against indulging in sexual immorality is that the body, as a whole, is one in which God chooses to live and last forever.

Here he is stating a great truth about sexuality. We have to go back to Genesis 1:27 to find that, when God created us, He made us in His image—“male and female he created us.” That is, the male and femaleness within mankind is created in the image of God. That is, my person, my body, and you—your person and your body—are a visible expression of the invisible nature of God. Our maleness bears witness to the nature of God, who seeks to enter the very life of the one loved. And our femaleness bears witness to the very nature of the God, who seeks to receive the very life of the one loved. The stomach does not express God’s nature, but our sexuality does. Therefore, Paul is saying, sexuality cannot simply be seen as some part within the body, but as an expression of the entire body. This personhood, in its femaleness, is designed to receive the Lord and, in its maleness, is designed to enter into the Lord. Paul says, “The body for the Lord and the Lord for the body.”

Then, sexuality within our personhood reflects the eternal unchanging nature of God, He is as committed to raising our body from the dead as He was committed to raising Jesus from the dead. That’s Paul’s precise point in verse 14: “By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead,

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and he will raise us also” (NIV). Our body, our identity, our personhood, bears the visible stamp of the invisible nature of God. It is something that God has a permanent plan for.

Therefore, Paul is saying, “Don’t think of those parts of your body that are sexual in nature as being on an equal level as the stomach, because they reveal something far more permanent about your nature than does the stomach.” God has no permanent plan for the stomach but He does have a permanent plan for the body. And He’s going to raise it.

Therefore, the body is not meant for immorality, it is the Lord’s, since it is His on a permanent basis. But this is not the totality of Paul’s argument. He goes on, in verses 15–18, to say the body is already presently joined to Christ. That’s why it cannot be used immorally. By the way, if you get lost in some of Paul’s logic in 1 Corinthians 6, maybe this is one of those passages that Peter talks about—there are some things of Paul that are difficult to understand. I am intrigued by the way he goes about this matter.

In verses 15–18, the body is already joined to Christ. He asks the question, to start with, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?” (NIV). What is a “member”? We think of membership in terms of a social organization. That doesn’t have all that strong a hold, does it? I’m a member of a social club, but I can drop out if I need to. Membership isn’t all that strong. If something comes up that’s a little bit better or maybe it’s inconvenient for me to continue to be a member of that association, then I can simply drop my membership. The word, though, that Paul uses here for “member” is the word that’s used to describe a limb of the body. My hand does not decide, “Today I don’t feel like belonging to the rest of George Wood, so I’ll go off and do my own thing.” The membership in Christ is seen as that strong. We are literally members of Him when we have come to Him and, therefore, we have a union with Him that is inseparable. Meaning that, therefore, what my hand does, inevitably I must do. What my foot

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does, I must do. My foot doesn't decide to go out on strike and walk down the road and not take me with it. This is going to be Paul's point here, as he raises this question.

He's saying, "If you knew that your body was a member of Christ, would you then engage in immorality?" He uses an example of wrongful use of the body. "Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 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'" (verses 15-16, NIV).

Paul uses a sort of unusual illustration here. He doesn't use the example of a young couple that is in love, nor of an adulterous relationship. But he uses, rather, the illustration which speaks most of all of casual sex—a relationship with a prostitute. He's saying to these Corinthians who are claiming "Your body doesn't mean anything, you can indulge it how you want," that they are drawing Christ into even the most casual sexual relationship. They are creating a life-sustaining relationship with that individual. And even in casual, physical relationships, from God's point of view, it is never casual.

In the book *Sex for Christians*, it says this, "There is no such thing as casual sex. No matter how casual people are about it. The Christian assaults reality. It is night out at the brothel. He uses a woman and puts her back in the closet, where she can be forgotten. But the reality is he has put away a person with whom he has done something that was meant to inseparably join them. It is wrong because it violates the inner-reality of the act. It is wrong because unmarried people engage in a life-uniting act without a life-uniting intent."

Paul says, "Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute?" The word that he uses for "shall I then take" is an extremely strong word. It doesn't reflect it in the English. But it's a verb which means "to in effect take up and take away." It means that, in order to have a

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casual sexual liaison, one literally has to take off his members and take them away from Christ. Paul's saying that Christ cannot be a part of that relationship. When you engage in a sexually immoral relationship, you make a direct blow at the principle—the body is the Lord's. It cannot be the Lord's, because the Lord would not have that relationship. It's to take up one's members and rob Christ of what belongs to Him.

Verses 17–18 reflect that true union with Christ involves uniting with Him in the spirit. It also means that sexual immorality in the believer's life does alienate the body from Christ. Verse 18 says, "All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (NIV). What does this particular phrase mean? Does it mean that sexual immorality is the only sin that can be committed by the body? Or is it the only sin which bodily appetite instigates? Or is it the only sin which will harm the body? For we know that drugs harm the body, alcohol harms the body. Other kinds of things really bring harm to the body. What exactly does he mean by "Do you not know that all the other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body"? He is saying this: Sexual sin is the only sin which, by its very nature, alienates the body from Christ. Because the body is joined to Christ. Other sins explicitly and directly transfer allegiance and break our union with Him, but by this sin, a person detaches himself immediately from Christ. He professes to be united with what is incompatible to Christ. Therefore, he is saying that to sin against this body sexually is to rob it of its part in Christ, to cut it off from its eternal destiny, and to put it outside the realm of the resurrection power of Christ. Very strong words.

III. He then gives a third argument about sexual immorality, saying that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

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Earlier, in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul had told the Corinthians that the whole church was the temple of the Lord. Now he speaks of us individually being a temple, an inner shrine of the Lord. Two words could be used for temple. One is to describe the whole area of the temple and the other, the inner shrine. Paul says that's what we are. We are the inner shrine, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Pagan temples were centers for immorality. But Christian temples are centers of morality, and Paul says, "You are bought and paid for with a price. You are not your own. You are Christ's and the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Therefore, regard your body as His."

I've found that I take much better care of something that is valuable that isn't mine than something that is my own. In such a way, Paul is saying to us that our bodies are not our own. They are the Lord's. Because they are His property, all the more we ought to take care of them and regard them.

Paul then gives us, in closing, some practical ways of dealing with the temptation of sexual immorality. We must be convinced that, first of all, it is wrong before we can begin to deal with avoiding it.

A. His first advice, in verse 18, is the advice and counsel—"Flee from sexual immorality."

The deeper meaning of this word is "run!" Paul is doing a very profound thing here about sexual immorality. He's saying that when you are tempted with sexual immorality, you don't get into a theological argument of whether it's right or wrong. Isn't it funny how you can play games with yourself and convince yourself and do things that are wrong? So he's saying, when you're being tempted sexually, don't get into "does the Scripture really speak against this or am I the unique exception to the rule?" and stay there and consider the possibility. No! He says, "flee."

The word "flee" is in a present imperative tense, which means that it could be translated something like this. "Don't stop and dispute about it. Make it a practice of fleeing at once."

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“Make it a practice to flee when confronted with immorality.” Don’t just stay there and think, “Maybe I should consider this longer.”

St. Augustine, the fourth century Christian bishop, has a remarkable story in his *Confessions* book that he wrote which described his changed life with Christ. Augustine tells how in his unconverted days he allowed himself to become a willing victim of sexual immorality, quite flagrantly. He lived as careless a life as any other pagan of the day. He associated with them. When he got converted, the great question that was on his mind was this, “Will I ever be able to live according to the Christian standard of holiness? Will I ever be able to keep myself away from sexual immorality?” When he first yielded to Christ, he took as his life text Romans 13:13–14, where Paul exhorts the believer to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. Long after his conversion, he did not even choose to go to the part of town where his non-Christian companions of previous days lived. He just didn’t feel he had the strength to even encounter that particular sector of the town. But one day, a matter of business called him there. As he was walking along the street, he suddenly saw one of the beautiful young women who had been one of his companions before he became a Christian. The moment her eyes lit upon him, her face was illuminated with delight. She came running with outstretched arms saying, “Augustine! Where have you been for so long? I have missed you!” Augustine turned and gathered up his long philosopher’s gown and started to run. It was not a very dignified proceeding for a theological doctor or professor of rhetoric, to run down the street with a girl chasing him. She called to him, “Why do you run? It is only I!” to which Augustine looked back and explained, “I run because it is not I.”

I kind of like that. Augustine recognized that the new nature of Christ had separated him from his old nature. His old nature would have stayed, but, “It is no longer I, but Christ living in me.” And

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he was off again. “The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Begin with the instinct that the Holy Spirit will build within you with respect to sexual immorality—flee. Do not allow yourself to get into situations where you are needlessly exposed to sexual temptation. Avoid them. Flee.

B. The second thing Paul says is, “Glorify God with your body” (verse 20). In effect, “Maintain the beauty of the temple without defiling it, without offering it to another person outside of marriage.” Let me share a few other things quickly that are not in 1 Corinthians 6, but I think complete the subject. If you’ve committed sexual immorality, then be restored to God through repentance. In 2 Corinthians 12:21, Paul says to the Corinthians, “Many of you have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which you have indulged.” His hope had been that, by writing the first letter, they would have repented. In other words, sexual sin is not of the nature that would forever alienate you from Christ. It can be repented of and you can be completely restored, as though you had never sinned.

IV. A fourth matter is: “Share your life struggles with another believer for prayer and for counsel.”

There are various people who are tempted in different ways. Some are more tempted, for example, to steal. Some are tempted to just have a mean and angry spirit. Some are more tempted in regard to sexual immorality—in the area of your life you know where you are the most vulnerable to temptation. Some of you would never be tempted if a hundred dollars were laid out on a table and there was nobody around. Your first instinct would be to return it to the rightful owner. Some of you would look at the hundred dollar bill and have an insatiable drive to take it and run off with it. It’s the same way with sexual immorality. It comes at different levels for different people.

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When we are struggling in an area, it helps us to share it with another believer—someone older than us, someone wiser than us in the Lord—for prayer and for counsel. Galatians 6:2 says “Share your burdens with one another and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The devil likes to isolate us. He likes for us to think we’re the only ones going through that problem. We’re the only ones who can be that wicked, mean and nasty. Therefore because we are such terrible reprobates we are separated from Christ and there’s no hope for us. So just drift off from Christ. That’s not the word of the Scripture. When you’re struggling, share with another believer.

V. Finally, Philippians 4:8. Build a healthy fantasy life.

“Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

In regard to the sexual temptations which come along, we ought to really consider how much Christ is united to our body and us to His. One of the things that we could do, even on a mental plain, in regard to confronting sexual immorality, is to see Jesus in the mental picture, which is being drawn. Sexual immorality inevitably comes to us in the form of it being without the Lord in the picture. How different to draw the person of Jesus Christ and put Him right in the picture and see what He would do with the immoral fantasy with which we are wrestling. Put Christ in the picture and begin building a healthy view of life.

Here is kind of plain talk for Corinthian and Californian Christians. Why we should indeed abstain from sexual immorality. Paul is going to have more to say about the subject as we share again about it next week in 1 Corinthians 7. So we’re sort of midway through this particular subject.

Closing Prayer

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Probably, Lord, no thing is more difficult to talk about in a public setting than the matter which we have shared today, because it is so individual and personal and private. But, Lord, You made our bodies. You knew what You were doing when You made them. You had purposes for the body to fulfill. We are grateful, Lord, that You have a permanent plan for our body. Some aspects of our bodies are simply for this life on earth. But our personhood, our identity, which involves our maleness and femaleness, somehow, in Your good pleasure, You have chosen to incorporate in Your eternal plan for us. We thank You for that, Lord Jesus. We thank You that our union with You can be spoken of, also, as being members of You. That comforts us when we are so afflicted with temptations that raise questions about our union with You, and the enemy comes along and says, “Are you really a Christian? Are you really saved? Will you be here today and gone tomorrow?” You speak of us as being so irrevocably linked with You that we are part of Your body, members of You. Lord, we know that this, right now, is something in Spirit, as Paul indicated. But we thank You that our union with You is so lasting and fixed. We thank You also, Lord, for the pressures that we face in this area of sexuality, because through them, You’re producing in us strength and character. Building in us choices. We pray, Lord, that in all things we will glorify You. We also recognize, Lord, that sometimes there is failure in our life. We’re thankful in those moments that You are a God who hears our cry of confession, who will never cast us off, but who will receive us. A God who refuses to link up with us when we are rebellious and unrepentant and insist on going our own way. A God, nevertheless, who is full of compassion and tenderness and mercy and restoration, when we turn to You after doing wrong. Lord, we pray that, upon Your people, would come a continual awareness that, indeed, we are the temples of the Holy Spirit and we’re designed to live for You; and have the gracious

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privilege of always and in everything honoring You. We thank You for this. In Christ's name.

Amen.