

Holiness in God's Temple

Week 5 in Our Weekly Study of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Orchard Park Wesleyan Church

Week of October 7, 2018

Day 1: Permissible or Profitable? Conqueror or Conquered?

"You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is good for you. And even though 'I am allowed to do anything,' I must not become a slave to anything."

1 Corinthians 6:12 NLT

Don't you love when God shows you something deep that you never noticed before? We left off at verse 11 in our study of 1 Corinthians last week and considered what we used to be, what we are now in Christ, and what our future role with Him will be. This week, we'll study the second half of the same chapter, and while the ethical components differ between the two (lawsuits versus sexual immorality), the underlying eschatological theme, admonishment against impurity, and encouragement to live as we are called remain the same.

Please read 1 Corinthians 6:12 above or in your Bible.

- What did we conclude that we are last week, based on 1 Corinthians 1:11 and Romans 8:37?

The ESV translation of 1 Corinthians 6:12 renders the end of the verse as “but I will not be dominated by anything.” As those who are more than conquerors in Christ, we have power and dominion over sin because we have the Spirit of God—the same one who triumphed over the grave and raised Christ from the dead. We’ll study more about God’s Spirit on Day 4 this week, but for now, we need to simply understand that this same Spirit is alive within us. He gives us the ability to live victoriously over sin and free from its bondage.

Does this mean that we’ll never sin? No. As long as we are alive in earthly bodies, we still have to contend with the sinful desires of our flesh. We will sin, but we no longer live lives that are bound in slavery to it. We are not mastered by our flesh because “the Spirit who is in [us] is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.” We have freedom and power over sin, so our lives are no longer ruled by it.

Do you remember back on Day 4 of Week 3 when we talked about the difficulty of living holy lives? We read, in 1 Peter 2:16, that our old nature—our natural self—will remain and that we could, because of it, misuse our freedom from sin in Christ as an excuse to keep on living in sin. This is exactly what we see happening at large in the Corinthian church.

I’m going to point out something that may be so obvious to you but that I missed for years: Look again at our verse for today. Do you notice the quotation marks around the first phrase in each sentence? This is the misapplied freedom that the Corinthians are claiming in Christ! These quotation marks indicate that these must have been common sayings within that church. The Corinthian Christians claimed their freedom in Christ as justification for satisfying any desire they had—and as we have found over and over in our study, our natural desires do not often fall in line with the holiness and righteousness of God. The church in Corinth was wrong to use freedom in Christ as an excuse to keep on sinning, but Paul, true to form, quickly and thoroughly dismantles their logic.

In his rebuttal, Paul does not just prove that the Corinthian church was incorrectly using their freedom; he reminds them of what sin is and what it inevitably seeks to do. It always seeks to raise itself up to dominate the person committing it by enslaving that person to sinful desires that can only be satisfied by indulging in more sin.

But, in Christ, we are more than conquerors! Sin seeks to dominate and enslave; Christ frees us from it. We are no longer weak to sin, controlled by it; we are strong in His Spirit, victorious over fleshly desires. We will not be enslaved to anything!

Now begs the question, How? How do we live victoriously over sin? It’s one thing to claim this victory and encourage each other with the truth; it’s another to understand how we carry this out in our everyday lives. Not only is temptation all around us, but some of us may have lived trapped in habitual sin for so long that we can’t imagine freedom from it. Some of us may also wonder how we discern between our freedom in Christ and falling into sin without becoming so stringent that we turn to legalism and become dominated by that.

Please read 2 Corinthians 10:2-5 and Ephesians 5:10-20.

- Paul is defending himself from those who think he acts from _____ motives.
- List everything against which Paul says we fight.
- Whose weapons do we use in our battles? How does Paul describe these weapons?
- What does Paul tell the Ephesians not to do?
- What should they do instead?

Part of walking in the Spirit means that we need to intentionally take control of our flesh by living purposeful, thoughtful lives.

When it comes to sinful human nature, we indeed have a battle. As we read a couple weeks ago in 1 Peter 2:1, our natural desires “wage war” against our souls. But praise God, we don’t have to stand up to these desires on our own strength or even using our own weapons. God gives us “His own mighty weapons” that destroy what is false and what is proud—anything that sets itself up to be a stronghold in our lives.

What exactly is a stronghold? I have heard good teaching that describes a stronghold as anything that raises itself up above God in a place of authority in our lives. It controls us; it governs our decision-making. I agree with this. But because there are so many mentions of God as our stronghold in times of trouble, I think we need more of an understanding:

Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines a stronghold as “a fortified place” or as “a place of security or survival; a place dominated by a particular group or marked by a particular characteristic.” It is a place of safety—where you run when you feel threatened.

David often and rightly referred to God as his stronghold. God is the One we run to when the enemy closes in. So when sin seeks to dominate our lives, enslave us, and become a stronghold, it is setting itself up to replace God as our place of safety. The enemy would like nothing better than to replace God with a meaningless, destructive substitute, and he uses sin’s victory in our lives to accomplish that aim. But praise God, we have His weapons to fight against this.

How do we fight this battle to win—not by fleshly means but according to the Spirit of God and with His weapons? We make a practice of discerning our own thoughts and desires. We ask ourselves questions that mirror what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:12: *Is this helpful to me? Is what I want to do controlling me, or am I controlling it?*

By training ourselves to look at our own thoughts and desires and compare them to who Christ is, what He says, and the authority He should have in our lives, we're taking those thoughts captive to Jesus. He is the victor; every thought or sinful desire must answer to Him first. This keeps God—not sin—in His rightful place as our refuge and stronghold.

Consider: Do you have the tendency to use your freedom and forgiveness in Jesus to justify sinful choices? Do you have areas of temptation that threaten to take control from you? Identifying them is the first and most important step. Ephesians 5 says that we need to expose what is in darkness, making those things visible by the light of Christ. Once we expose the secret places of our own hearts by Christ's light, He will begin to work there in healing and strength.

Pray: Thank God that He wants you to run to Him in times of trouble. Ask Him to keep your mind firmly guarded against anything that would try to take His place; ask Him to help you understand your own desires and to give you His strength and His mighty weapons to live victoriously and take control of those things that would seek to control you.

Day 2: The Purpose of Our Bodies

"You say, 'Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food.' (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies."

1 Corinthians 6:13 NLT

Yesterday, we talked about waging war *against* the flesh and living in accordance with the Spirit of God. Today, we're going to talk about the purpose of our bodies and why God cares so much about them. In a few days, we'll study more evidence of how much God cares for our bodies, and we'll talk specifically about some practical ways we ought to care for them. But for today, we'll stick with *why* God cares.

Verses 13 and 14 really lead us into the main cause for rebuke in this section of the chapter: sexual immorality. Not only was the Corinthian church engaging in sexual sin, but they had a fairly casual attitude toward it. From the preceding verse, we can conclude that they felt they were allowed to gratify their sexual desires however they wanted because they had total freedom in Christ. But Paul quickly smashes this argument by quoting what is likely another commonly used quote from that time.

Please read 1 Corinthians 6:13-14.

No one can argue that food was made for our bodies and that our bodies were made to need food. So if these two good things that God created fulfill their purpose but will still someday be destroyed, how much more powerful is the argument that follows?

- For what were our bodies NOT made?

- For what were our bodies made?

- What is designated for our bodies?

In this one sentence, Paul destroys the Corinthian notion

that sexual immorality was acceptable, reminds them of who sets the rules for our bodies, asserts why He has authority to do so and sums up the purpose of life. Let's see how I got to this statement.

Please read Psalm 138:8, Isaiah 43:7, and John 12:27-28.

- Fill in the blanks

“The LORD will work out His _____ for _____—

For your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.

Don't abandon me, for you _____ me.”

Psalm 138:8 NLT

“Everyone who is _____ by my name,

Whom I _____ for my _____,

Whom I _____ and _____.”

Isaiah 43:7 ESV

- Why didn't Christ ask God to save Him from what He knew was coming?

- What did He ask the Father to do instead (v. 28)?

Sometimes it blows my mind how much energy people put into trying to understand the meaning of life! It is written throughout scripture, clear as day, from the mouth of God Himself. The only thing we need to figure out is specifically *how* God calls each of us to glorify Him.

Even Jesus' earthly body was designated for the glory of His Father. He submitted it to death, and in so doing, God was glorified to the utmost. Few of us are asked to physically lay down our lives for the glory of God, but we *are* called to surrender to His will. As we've talked about many times, God's will for His people always involves their holiness and purity because this is part of how He displays His glory to the world.

Please read Isaiah 40:12-26. If you want to read more, I suggest turning back to Job 38-41.

- Write down a few descriptions of who God is and what He has done that best speak to you about His greatness and glory.

These passages speak about God's surpassing glory in words I could never compile. Furthermore, they establish beyond a shadow of a doubt that *God alone* is Creator. Combine this with what we read in Isaiah 43:7, and we cannot argue against His right and authority to tell us how He wants us to use our bodies and how He does *not* want us to use them. We'll learn plenty about this in the days and weeks to come, but for now, we need to understand that He alone is the One who sets the standards here. Our preferences don't; our desires don't; our culture doesn't; not even the church does.

Let's also be reminded that God's glory is not dependent upon us; it exists whether we acknowledge it or not. However, He gives His people the responsibility of cooperating with Him in obedience so that we can experience the resulting blessing: that He will display *His* glory *through* us as a reflection of who He is. This is our privilege: that we are mirrors and displays of the glory of the Most High.

Additionally, as God's people called by Christ, we are called to share in eternal glory. We display it here on earth, being "transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another," through His Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). Then, at the Final Day, we receive glory from God for all eternity. I absolutely love the way the ESV translates 2 Corinthians 4:17—that we will receive an "eternal weight of glory." This is why I love it so much:

Read 1 Kings 8:10-11.

The Hebrew word that renders the phrase "could not continue their service" is *amad*. It literally means "to take one's stand, stand." God's glory—the glory He asks us to reflect and the glory He will give to His people for eternity—is so heavy that we cannot stand underneath its weight. So as we consider our purpose of glorifying Him, we cannot regard it lightly; God's purpose for our bodies is grand, carrying a privilege and weight beyond our comprehension.

Lastly, as if we haven't studied enough today to encourage us to holiness in our bodies, read the last part of 1 Corinthians 6:14 again. Consider it alongside Philipians 3:21:

"He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control."

God cares about how we treat our bodies now because, when we belong to Christ, our bodies are meant for eternity! They will be changed and glorified, but they will still be our bodies. God created them with eternal significance, and someday they will receive glory from Him. So we treat them now as such. We'll talk more

about how this should affect how we physically care for our bodies on Day 5 this week, but for now, I'll conclude by saying that God's call to holiness and purity—even in the body—always includes sexual purity. Sexual sin always defiles, and tomorrow we'll study why.

Consider God's purpose for your life. You were created, chosen, and called by Him and for Him. What greater significance is there than being a beloved and treasured reflection of the glory of the One and Only? Are you living this out in cooperation with Him? Do you wonder how you're *supposed* to live this out?

Pray: Take some time to thank God for His purposes for you. Ask Him to reveal more of how He wants you to follow Him in full cooperation. Ask Him to open doors for you that align with His purpose and calling on your life.

Day 3: One Flesh, One Spirit

"But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him."
1 Corinthians 6:17 NLT

I've referenced our verse for today many times already throughout this study because it is such a succinct yet thorough assertion of our intimate relationship with Christ. I chose it for our main study point today because, as we talk about sexual sin versus sexual purity, intimacy is inherently part of the conversation. We left off yesterday by saying that sexual sin always defiles, and today, we'll study why it does—and why it is so very important to God.

God addresses sexual sin many times throughout His Word. We studied some of God's prohibitions against and consequences for sexual sin in our devotionals in Leviticus, and we can read accounts of both the ungodly and the godly who fell to sexual sin throughout the Old Testament. Why is this particular sin one to which God gives such serious attention throughout scripture? Because, as we'll see today, everything is at stake when it comes to sexual immorality. No other sin has the potential to affect the whole person—heart, soul, mind, and body—like sexual sin, and it steals us from the One who should be our First Love.

Please read 1 Corinthians 6:15-18.

There is a lot packed within these few verses. Let's identify the main points:

- Verse 15: Our bodies are parts of _____.
- Verse 16: In sex, man and woman are joined together as _____.
- Verse 17: "The person joined to the Lord is _____ with Him."
- Verse 18: Sexual immorality is a _____ against your own _____. No other sin affects the body so clearly as this one does.

Sex affects the body and so much more. Sex is the most intimate expression we have within human relationships—so much so that it actually unites two people into one and engages mind, body, and spirit. God created it as a source of blessing, intimacy, and pleasure within marriage (Gen. 2:24, Prov. 5:18-19), and because God's people are joined with Him in Spirit and are considered part of Christ's body, we cannot separate God from our sexual lives. So purity is an absolute necessity!

This is enough reason to remain within God's prescribed boundaries for sexual relationships. However, there is much more.

Sex represents our relationship to Jesus. Not only is Christ a part of us and therefore inherently part of our sexual relationships; sexual intimacy is actually a shadow of the intimacy we should experience with Him.

Jesus often refers to Himself as the Bridegroom in the gospels, and in Ephesians 5, Paul describes the marriage relationship of husband to wife as that of Christ to His church. Revelation 19:7 gives us a picture of Christ's bride, clothed in "the finest of pure white linen...[that] represents the good deeds of God's holy people." We, the church, are Christ's bride, and as such, our most intimate expression of relationship on earth—sex—cannot be separated from the intimacy in relationship that Jesus wants with His bride.

Please read John 15:1-11, Romans 8:9-11, and 1 John 4:13.

- Fill in the blanks for John 15:4 and 15:5.

(4) "Remain _____, and I will remain _____. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you _____ cannot be fruitful unless you _____."

(5) "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain _____ me, and I _____ them,

will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

- According to Romans 8, where does God’s Spirit dwell?
- Why do we have God’s Spirit in us (1 John 4:13)?

Romans 8:9-11 explains how intimacy with Christ begins. When we belong to Him, His Spirit takes up residence in our heart, and we become one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). Already we can see that this spiritual oneness bears resemblance to the physical oneness that Paul describes between man and woman in a sexual relationship. But it doesn’t stop here. John 15 and 1 John 4:13 illustrate the depth of intimacy that Christ wants with His people. There are over nine references to “remaining in” Christ or in His love within this short section of John 5. He can’t say it enough! Jesus wants a relationship that is perfectly unified and completely intimate. He wants us to embrace our oneness in relationship with Him.

So sex, in a sense, is intended to be the physical representation of God’s spiritual intimacy with His people. Man and woman become one as Christ and His chosen are one. God created sex to be this way so that our physical need ultimately points us to fulfillment through His Son.

Now let’s read Ephesians 5:25-27 and Revelation 21:9-11.

- List the descriptors for the church or the Bride as presented to Christ:

The splendor of our untainted purity is worth everything to our Bridegroom. He gave Himself up to death on the cross so that we might be purified and sanctified through Him and presented to Him as a radiant Bride someday. When we reflect on this as the greater spiritual implication of our physical sexual relationships, can we see why God places such emphasis on our purity and holiness within this area of life?

Sex is a prime target for the enemy’s corruption. We have one brief final thought to consider before we end today. We have established that our sexual relationships affect our bodies that God created and treasures; they affect our minds and our hearts; and they are a reflection of the intimacy we should have with Jesus. Consequently, sexual purity holds a special significance in the heart of God; we are the bride for His Son.

Our enemy knows that he can’t hurt God, so he wants to harm and destroy anything that God holds dear. We, as God’s treasured people—set aside for holiness, purity, and a future with His only Son—are the target. What better way to destroy the whole person than with something that affects the deepest part of that person and diverts his attention from the One to Whom it is intended to point? God knows what we’re up against, and He knows how devastating a fall in this area will be to His beloved. So He establishes His rules for purity to guard His people.

Consider that you are Christ's bride—the one for whom He died to present to Himself in splendor. Your purity is precious to Him, and sexual sin affects all aspects of life perhaps more than any other type of sin. Anything that falls outside of God's intended place for sex—between one husband and one wife—is sin.

Pray: Maybe this isn't an area of temptation for you; if not, praise God. If it is, surrender it to Him now. Ask Him to strengthen you and to change the desires of your heart to match His.

Day 4

Part 1: Who is the Holy Spirit

“Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself,”
1 Corinthians 6:19 NLT

On Day 1, we studied a little of what it means to walk according to the Spirit. Yesterday, we were reminded that God's Spirit dwells inside us when we choose to follow Jesus. Today, we're going to try to understand a little more about who the Holy Spirit is, His role in the Trinity, and His role in our lives.

Let's begin by reading the creation account in Genesis 1; then read John 1:1-5.

These two passages echo each other, and in them, we can see the presence and activity of all three members of the Trinity in creation. John calls Christ the Word and tells us that He was present “in the beginning,” that God created all things through Him, and that nothing was created without Him. If God spoke creation into being, and Christ is the Word, then we see Father and Son working perfectly in tandem. So now, what about the Holy Spirit?

Genesis 1:2 tells us that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” This “hovering” indicates action and anticipation.

Please read Acts 2:1-4.

- Describe the events of this passage in your own words.

If you're like me, the word “spirit” might give you a sense of the intangible, making an understanding of who the Holy Spirit is that much more difficult. But praise God, He tells us in great detail about this third Person of the Trinity, and this is where we will spend the remainder of our time today.

In Acts 2, we see the Spirit's presence manifested in a strong windstorm and tongues of fire. Some commentators assert that the Holy Spirit was present as a wind at creation, too. However, others argue that this couldn't have been the case because God had not yet separated the water and sky, thus creating air. We're not going to attempt to take a side in that matter today but rather, we want to identify the common denominator of physical action within these two passages. The Holy Spirit manifests Himself in an active way; in short, He *does* things.

In order to find out more about who God's Spirit is and what He does, we need to turn to **John 14:15-26 and 16:5-15**.

Let's list all that we can learn about the Holy Spirit from these two passages:

- He is our Helper.
- He can be sent by the Father or the Son.
- He convicts the world (concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment).
- He leads us into all the truth.
- He doesn't speak on His own authority but only what He hears.
- He declares the future (see also Joel 2:28).
- He glorifies Christ by taking what belongs to Christ from the Father and declaring it to us.
- He will remain with us forever.
- The world cannot know Him, but we do.
- He dwells both with us and in us.
- He teaches and brings what Christ says to remembrance.

This tells us a great deal about God's Spirit, but we're not done yet. Consider what we find elsewhere in scripture:

- He is active and powerful (Genesis 1:2, Acts 2:1-4).
- Because He is God, He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7).
- He gives life (John 6:63).
- He raised Christ from the dead, and someday He will raise our bodies, too.

- He helps us in our weakness and even intercedes for us according to God's will, praying for us with groaning too deep for words (Romans 8:26-27).
- He manifests Himself in spiritual gifts to the believer (1 Corinthians 12:4).
- He is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17).
- His work is always productive (Galatians 5:22-23).

Considering all that we have just listed, I would say that many of us—myself included—don't instinctively give the Holy Spirit enough importance. He is fully God, inseparable from the Trinity, but unique and distinct just as Father and Son are inseparable but distinct.

I hesitate to try to summarize what really cannot be summarized, but my finite mind craves definition to help me understand! So, if we were to try to broadly define the role of the Holy Spirit, perhaps we can say that it is to actively and powerfully manifest or "work out" the will of God—and in this role, He helps and empowers the people of God to do the will of God.

Now that we have a better understanding of who the Spirit is, what He does, and how we can recognize His work, we have to come back to Paul's admonishment of the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 6:19.

Part 2: The Temple of the Holy Spirit

In light of what we just learned about the Holy Spirit, let's revisit this loaded (rhetorical) question that Paul launches at the Corinthian church. Re-read our verse for today, above. The very Spirit of God—the One who brought creation into being, raised Christ from the dead, and empowered all sorts of miracles; the One who manifested His presence in a roaring wind and tongues of fire—He moved into our bodies when we chose Christ. We are the temple of God.

In our present culture, we don't have much connection to temples, but the landscape of Ancient Greece was dotted with many of them—each beautifully constructed as a place to worship and pay homage to pagan deities. The Corinthians would have well understood the significance of what Paul was saying. However, the temple about which Paul spoke—our bodies—is best understood when considered in light of the Temple that God instructed the Israelites to build during their time of wandering in the Sinai wilderness.

If you'll remember back to our study in Leviticus this past spring, this Temple (or Tabernacle) was not the result of human design but God's. He gave Moses intricate and specific instructions for building the Tabernacle in Exodus 26-27—right down to the number of loops and the arrangement of clasps on the curtains that hung within. We found that God's reason for this level of detail wasn't because He wanted to make a difficult task for His people but because this was the place where His Spirit would dwell with His people. As such, God chose to model His earthly Tabernacle to reflect His heavenly sanctuary.

The altar for burnt offerings was situated in the outer courtyard; this was separated from the inner

sanctuary (the Holy Place) by a veil. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place, and only after they had rightly purified themselves—inside and out—according to all of God’s instructions for washing and sacrifice. Another veil separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place; this veil was similar to the

one that separated the Holy Place from the courtyard except that it was embroidered with cherubim. The only article permitted in the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant because it was here that God would descend to meet with His people above the Mercy Seat of the Ark (see Exodus 25:17-22).

Please read Hebrews 9:1-14.

- How often was the High Priest allowed to enter the Most Holy Place?
- What did he have to do before entering?

The physical separation of the Most Holy Place from the rest of the temple and the required rituals for purification tell us that we are not worthy to approach God’s holiness in our natural state. He is so holy, and His glory is so all-consuming that the Ark of the Covenant—God’s dwelling place—had to be properly set back and separated from the rest of the temple. No one could approach it until the Day of Atonement when only the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place. Even then, and even after extensive purification, he had to burn incense on the altar outside the Most Holy Place in order to create a cloud of smoke to protect himself from God’s presence and glory.

Please read Matthew 27:51, Hebrews 10:19-22, and John 14:23.

- What happened to the veil into the Most Holy Place at Christ’s death?
- Into what place do we have the confidence to enter because of the sacrifice of Christ?
- In what state do our hearts and bodies enter that place?

- Where does Jesus say that He and His Father will make their home?

There have been two Jerusalem temples built up to this point in history, and both of them followed the exact same blueprint that God gave to Moses for the Tabernacle. The second temple existed in Jesus' day (it was destroyed in AD 70). It was there that Christ taught on several occasions, and it was that veil that tore down when Jesus gave up His Spirit on the cross. Paul would have travelled to Jerusalem to worship God in this exact temple many times. He understood the importance of holiness within the temple, and he understood the significance of the veil as it hung intact and when it was torn down. Access to God was granted to all; He had transferred the sin of humanity onto His Son. By Christ's blood, we were sprinkled clean, and God moved His Spirit's residence from the Most Holy Place of the temple to the inner depths of the human heart that chose to follow Christ.

Consider: How much energy have you given to understanding who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in the lives of believers, in the world, and in perfect unity with Father and Son? Jesus consoled His disciples in John 16:7, saying that it was actually beneficial to them that He (Christ) go away, because when He left, the Helper would come! Jesus knew who He was sending and what the Spirit would enable His people to do. This is the very same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, worked in creation, and utters truth from the mouth of God. He lives in you. Does this change your view of your body? How? Contemplating all of this, why is sinning against your own body such a serious offense to God? How ought you to treat it?

Pray: Thank God that He sent part of Himself—the Helper—to us. Ask Him to give you more, to fill you to the fullest measure with the power of His Spirit. *Thank You, God, that You love me so much that that You chose to place Your very Spirit inside of me. Please make me a temple worthy of Your presence—clean, holy, and reserved only for You. John 3:34 says that You give Your Spirit without limit. Lord, I want more of You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Day 5: How Do We Honor God in Our Bodies?

“for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”
1 Corinthians 6:20 NLT

Paul leaves the Corinthian church with a pretty hefty charge at the end of chapter six: “honor God with your body.” We have talked at length this week about God's Spirit and things of spiritual significance, and today, we're going to apply what we've studied to understanding how we can intentionally use our physical bodies to do as Paul commanded the Corinthians to do.

Before we identify the *how* in our study today, though, I'd like

to draw just a little more attention to the *what*. We've already talked about why as it pertains to God's love for our bodies and that He created them with eternal significance in mind. But as I was researching this week, this passage in Mark struck me profoundly. It's another familiar one, but as God so often does, He opened up my eyes to see something new.

Please read Mark 6:30-44, 53-56.

- Where did Jesus tell His disciples to go in verse 31? Why?
- What happened immediately after?
- What was Jesus' response (v. 34)?
- What did the disciples ask Jesus to do in verse 36?

In the beginning of this story, the 12 apostles had all returned to Jesus after He had sent them out as described in verses 7-13. They had done as He said: they went out in pairs, took nothing with them except a staff, wore two tunics, preached repentance, and cast out demons. What a time! So as they returned, can you imagine their excitement as they all rushed to tell Him everything that happened? Notice Christ's response, though: He slows them down like a good parent does to his or her kids when they get home from school. He knows exactly what they did and how He instructed them to travel—so He knows the physical toll it took on their bodies. Jesus tells His disciples to come away with Him to a secluded place to rest and replenish themselves because where they were upon their return was so busy that the twelve men didn't even have time to eat.

So they all left for some private rest and recovery time. What happened next? The crowds saw them heading off and rushed to beat them there. Jesus' compassion never ceases to amaze me. He had compassion on the physical condition of the twelve He sent out. Now the crowds have rushed to intercept their recovery, and Jesus' heart just pours out more mercy. Instead of sending them away, He begins to teach them extensively.

What happened next is what struck me most: the disciples noticed how late it was getting and that they were all out in the middle of nowhere. They asked Jesus to send the people away so that everyone in the crowds could go buy some dinner. This was a thoughtful request; the disciples had the good of the people in mind!

- Write down Jesus' response to this request:

Our Shepherd cares so much about the needs of His sheep that He is not just willing to provide the means for us to take care of ourselves; *He hand-feeds us when He sees that we need it.* And He's not just concerned with our spiritual "food." Jesus chose to personally provide for the

physical needs of a crowd of thousands--and although the text doesn't specify it, I believe the tired and hungry apostles were among those who partook of the meal.

If God cares about our bodies so much, then how ought we to treat them? The short answer: with love and care. God gives us specific examples throughout His Word of how to care for our bodies. He establishes rules and regulations that uphold and encourage that care. To list a few:

By giving them time for rest and leisure. In Leviticus 25, God institutes numerous festivals and holidays, each of them requiring some period of Sabbath—or rest. The passage that follows what we read today in Mark 6 describes Jesus sending His disciples out in the boat while He dismisses the crowd and goes up onto the mountain alone to pray. Rest is essential not just for the proper physical functioning of our bodies but for our mental and spiritual health, too—and it doesn't just refer to sleep. Rest can consist of quiet time before God; it can include doing something God created us to love! It is a time during which we can reflect on God and also let Him speak His love to us.

By attending to good health and proper medical care. Read 1 Timothy 5:23 and Mark 1:32-34. Our God cares about our physical health. Both of these passages concern sickness or an ailment of some kind. Rather than dismiss these conditions as temporal since they pertain just to the body, Jesus, in Mark 1:32-34, started healing “the whole city” after sundown. He had such concern for the health of the multitudes that He worked--probably through the night--to heal their sicknesses. Paul doesn't limit his discipleship of Timothy to spiritual level; he encourages Timothy to take care of his stomach.

Similarly, if we don't take care of our medical needs and general health, how can we expect to have the strength and stamina to give God our best?

By keeping them under control. Have you noticed that we've been turning to Galatians 5:22-23 just about every week? This week is no exception. Please review it.

- Which quality or qualities of the Fruit of the Spirit do you think we're going to discuss today?

Self control is an evidence of the work of God's Spirit in our lives that applies directly to the physical body. It requires almost a perfect balance. If we lean too far one way, we abuse our bodies by treating them with neglect; if we lean too far the other way, we sin in over-indulgence. Only by surrendering to the Holy Spirit can we be lovingly in control of our flesh and honor God in our bodies.

Consider: How do you regard your body? Do you consider it inferior to your spirit and your mind and deprive it of care? Do you indulge it too much? Do you love what God created and treat it so?

Pray: Ask God to help you in any areas in which you struggle to care for what He made for you. Ask Him enable you to live controlled, under the authority and power of His Spirit.