



151st Church of Christ
Small Group Study Guide – 1 CORINTHIANS
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AN IMPERFECT LOCAL CHURCH
A Study in 1 Corinthians

Lesson 10, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Sex: Flee Immorality
CLASS

GENERAL OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20, Reported Problems

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Sex: Flee Immorality

- 6:12-14 General principle: Lawful or helpful
- 6:15-18 Specifically: Flee immorality
- 6:19-20 Bought at a price

The problems of sexual immorality in the Corinthian church present an odd and contrasting mixture of cases. The church seems to have been more tolerant of immorality in the church than in the world. They allowed a case of incest but wouldn't eat with sexually immoral non-Christians. Some were going to prostitutes, while others were apparently advocating sexual abstinence even for married folks. It may be that some folks were living on both sides of these fences, but we should also assume that some members were erring in one direction while others were having problems in exactly the opposite direction.

Paul begins with a form of dialogue in which he refutes arguments that may have been advanced by the Corinthian Christians (vv. 12-14). Some may have claimed that what a person did with his body was of no importance since salvation was about a person's spirit. He then deals directly with the sin of sexual immorality, and, in particular, the use of prostitutes (vv. 15-18). He summarizes his objections using two metaphors (temple and slaves) to affirm that Christians must live as people whose bodies belong to God (vv. 19-20).

DISCUSSION

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Some commentators suggest that Paul is quoting three arguments touted by the Corinthians, and then refuting these claims:

- a. "All things are lawful for me" (v. 12).
- b. "Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods" (v. 13).
- c. "Every sin that a man does is outside the body" (v. 18b).

In support of the idea that these are not ideas that Paul accepts, but Corinthian claims that he refutes, is the fact that in each case the statement is followed immediately by “but,” and the reason why Paul rejects such ideas.

Whether Paul disagrees with these ideas or agrees with the general principles, though offering important qualifiers, is difficult to determine with certainty. If the origin of these statements remains unclear, Paul’s main points leave no doubt about the conduct he expects of Christians.

- 1. What does Paul say in chapters 5 & 6 that tell us clearly that he does not accept as absolute truth the statement, “All things are lawful for me”?**
- 2. If as a general principle all things are lawful or permissible, how could one become enslaved by that which is lawful?**
- 3. What are the similarities and differences between the relationship of the stomach to food as compared to the relationship between the Christian’s body and the Lord?**
- 4. Paul mentions the Christian’s body explicitly 7 times in this chapter (implied in other verses). Find them and identify the basic truths that he reveals about the integrity, ownership and use of the Christian’s body?**

Note: In most manuscripts, “body” is the last word in verse 20. The rest of the verse (“and in your spirit, which are God’s,” NKJV) is omitted (see ESV, NIV).

- 5. Why does Paul say it is wrong for a Christian to “become one” with a harlot? Why, since we are “joined to the Lord,” is it wrong to be joined to a harlot, but still acceptable to be joined to one’s spouse”? A failure to make this distinction might explain the problem that Paul will address at the beginning of chapter 7 concerning sexual abstinence in marriage.**

6. On this subject, what things does Paul expect the Corinthian Christians to already know, either by intuition or prior teaching, as indicated by the rhetorical question, “Do you not know?”

7. What does Paul mean by the statement that all sins except sexual sins are outside the body? Can you not think of any other sins that would seem to be “against the body”? Is Paul’s statement that immorality is a sin “against his own body,” a mere limitation on the general truth that sins are generally “outside the body,” or is it a direct disagreement with this claim?

8. According to his statement in verse 18, what would Paul likely say to the defense that being with a prostitute, “Didn’t mean anything. It was just sex”?

9. Some Corinthian philosophies claimed that what the body did could be totally separate from a person’s soul, and therefore, unrelated to his relationship with God. How might teachings such as Paul’s in Romans 8:9-10 have been distorted to support that view and thereby appear to justify the immorality that Paul condemns?

10. The word “flee” is usually used in the physical sense of fleeing from one place to another (cp. Matthew 2:13; 26:56). Paul uses it four times in a spiritual sense (1 Cor 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22). From what does Paul say we should flee and why might he have mentioned these things and not others? What connotation do you see in his choice of the word “flee” rather than something like “avoid” or “walk away from”?

11. Paul uses the analogies of the temple and a slave as he brings this section to a close. What fundamental idea is he presenting with these illustrations?

12. How is verse 20 much like verse 11 as a concluding statement of a major point? How do both verses tie Christian living to “the message of the cross” (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)?