

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## 1 CORINTHIANS 5-6

Often, you observe today's amoral world and assume it's never been so bad. *Then you read Romans 1*, Paul's famous description of the moral breakdown of Greco-Roman culture. The Roman world was X-rated.

It was full of *unbridled indulgence, calloused consciences, self-serving idolatry, and perverted sexuality*. Three times in Romans 1 Paul writes, "God gave them up!" or "God gave them over!" In other words, *God abandoned those who abandoned Him!*

When the Empire fell to the Goths and Vandals, it was not swords and spears that conquered - Rome's downfall was its own inability to control its sensual and selfish desires. It was *defeated by depravity*. Rather than conquered from *without*, Rome fell from *within*.

And when Paul wrote Romans 1, he was looking out his window at the city of Corinth. Metro Corinth was Paul's inspiration for his *portrait of perversion*. **Corinth was the city that had forgotten how to blush!**

The Corinthian Church was a tiny boat afloat on a sea of immorality - and tragically, the Gospel Ship had sprung a leak. The evil of the city had infiltrated the life of the church. And in 1 Corinthians 5-7, Paul tries to patch the leaks!... The apostle deals with the subjects of sex and marriage within the Christian community.

In Chapter 5, Paul addresses a shocking problem in the church... "It is actually reported *that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles - that a man has his father's wife!*" A young man in the church at Corinth was shacking up with his step-mom. Two church members were involved in blatant immorality.

It was an *infest of incest*, and *Paul was appalled...*

The NKJ translates the first words in verse 1, "*It is actually reported.*" Commentator Alan Redpath renders it, "*It is commonly reported...*" or "*It is everywhere noised abroad...*" In short, "*This is the talk of the town!*"

And Paul mourns over this - not even the perverted pagans tolerated this kind of immorality. This was so twisted it didn't even make sense to amoral minds.

And Paul doesn't just rebuke the perpetrators - he's asking the Corinthian Church, "*Doesn't anybody see that this is staining our reputation and our witness?*"

Verse 2, "*And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.*" Worse than the sin, was the church's attitude toward the sin. They were not only tolerating an awful immorality, but they were proud of their tolerance. *You can hear their boast, "The Bible says, 'Judge not that you be not judged.' Far be it from us to tell someone else what's right and wrong. We teach grace!"* It sounds like a 21st Century rationalization.

I like how Peterson's paraphrases verses 2-3, "One of your men is sleeping with his stepmother, and you're so above it all that it doesn't even faze you!"

Shouldn't this break your hearts? Shouldn't it bring you to your knees in tears? Shouldn't this person and his conduct be confronted and dealt with?" They were prideful when they should've been in mourning.

The Greek word Paul uses that gets translated "*mourned*" in verse 2 was used for grieving the dead.

They should've viewed this situation as a loss... *of virtue, purity, honor, character, witness*. They were *patting themselves on the back* when they should've been *falling on their knees and getting in their face*.

Verse 3 tells us, "For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed."

Notice, Paul here - *without speaking to this fellow personally - without hearing his heart - without listening to his rationalizations* - Paul rendered a judgment.

In Chapter 4, Paul warned us about making superficial judgments of another man's ministry. We don't know all the facts. We don't see a man's motive.

But this particular judgment had nothing to do with *motives* or *ministry* - it was about *morality*. This couple had constructed a blatantly sinful relationship.

The OT Law was clear about sexual taboos.

In Leviticus 18:8, God had plainly forbidden this kind of relationship. It was incest. This wasn't an issue of culture or personal preference. It wasn't a gray matter.

God addressed this issue with Israel in black and white. Thus, Paul becomes dogmatic here. The Bible had already issued its judgment on this man's sin.

And Paul isn't afraid to *stand up* where *God takes a stand* and to *speak up* where *God has clearly spoken*.

Today's church needs to follow Paul's example. We weaken our witness when we tolerate immorality.

Church discipline needs to be taken seriously.

Paul commands them, verse 4, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Again, this wasn't a struggling believer trying to straighten out his life and get victory over his sin. We need to help the person who wants victory.

Rather, this was a Christian who had deliberately ignored God's commandments and was living in open defiance. This kind of attitude cannot be tolerated!

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells us if someone sins, a brother should go to him and seek to restore him. If he fails; then come back with two or three believers. We can assume the Corinthians had taken those steps.

For Jesus says if the brother refuses to hear the two or three, then he should be brought before the whole church - and if that fails to convince him to repent, he should get the boot. You've heard of the *right hand of fellowship* - there's also the *left foot of dis-fellowship*.

But notice the goal at each stage of the discipline process... **it's to bring the brother to repentance.**

Even when he's kicked out of God's family, he's being "*delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.*" The idea is to let him taste the full consequences of his decisions - without the safety net of the Christian fellowship. Hopefully, that'll convince him of the error of his ways. The point of it all is for him to repent.

When a person is part of a church, certain protections are inherent. He or she is surrounded by support, and encouragement, and resources. To a degree, the church is sheltering him from the magnitude of his sin.

Paul's advice is to turn this guy out into the storm.

His problem was his flesh - his "*I know best...*" "*I can do it on my own...*" attitude - so let him *do it himself!*

Let him learn the hard way how much he needs to humble himself and submit to God's way. The Church does a person a disservice when we keep a rebellious person from reaping the full brunt of what they sow.

It's interesting, later in Paul's second letter to the Corinthian Church - 2 Corinthians 2:8 he encourages them to receive this man again into their fellowship. He writes, "*I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.*"

Apparently, the Corinthians go on to obey Paul and kick him out... and it produced the desired effect!

The man's season of separation from the fellowship brought on an attitude of repentance. Church discipline is never easy, but it's often necessary - *and it works*.

In verse 6, Paul addresses their previous attitude, "**Your glorying is not good.**" And wow, how the modern church needs to take this to heart. Today's world is *tolerant* of everything except *intolerance*.

Just because the world loses its moral bearings - and gets mushy about what's right and wrong - doesn't mean the Church should too. Realize, **we cannot be for God - we cannot love people - if we're not against sin.**

Paul warns, "**Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?**" Sin is like yeast. It works beneath the surface to permeate and infiltrate the whole lump. It infects the bread from the inside out.

It's like cancer - if allowed to spread, it can destroy the whole body - but if caught early, it can be cut out.

When it comes to *bad attitudes* and *blatant sin* at church, it needs to be dealt with sooner rather than later. **Tolerance or apathy is lethal.** If stubborn sins aren't cut out, they can spread and defile other areas.

This is why Paul says in verse 7, "**Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.**" "*Purge out the old leaven*" - in other words, get rid of the infecting behavior.

“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”

Notice Paul calls Jesus “*Our Passover.*” When the Hebrews exited Egypt and slavery the day before, God told them to not inject yeast into their bread. They were leaving the next day, and there would not be time for the bread to rise. The unleavened bread and their obedience were symbolic of their faith in God’s promise.

And that was just one of many symbols in the Passover that spoke of Jesus. He is also our *sacrificial lamb*, our *hidden matzo*, and our *cup of redemption*.

As the Hebrews celebrate Passover with unleavened bread, we Christians should celebrate our freedom with sincere devotion and the avoidance of deliberate sin.

In verse 9, Paul continues, “*I wrote to you in my epistle...*” *What epistle does he mean?* We’re not sure.

We call the letter we’re reading, “*First Corinthians,*” but apparently, it must’ve been “*Second Corinthians.*” For Paul says there was another letter prior to this one.

Some Bible scholars suggest, for multiple reasons, that **2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1** is actually the missing letter. Other biblical scholars conclude this previous letter was a correspondence that’s been lost...

It’s an interesting discussion, but it doesn’t change the meaning of Paul’s words. *He’d written before...*

“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet *I certainly did not mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person.”

Apparently, the Corinthians had gotten it backward. They turned up their noses at their *heathen neighbors* while ignoring the *hypocrisy in their own ranks*.

Rest assured, when the church views the people God wants to reach as the enemy, we become worthless to God. When we come out of the world, we're not supposed to shut the door behind us. We need to turn around in compassion and lend a helping hand.

Yet, that's not what happens in a lot of churches.

*Saints become snobs. Immoral people, irreligious people* get the impression the church is a *club for the clean-cut*, rather than a *hospital for the messed-up*.

I've heard a sad statistic. **By the time a person has been a Christian for two years, they've basically lost all meaningful relationships with unbelievers.** After two years, their whole life revolves around the church and other Christians. They have no friendships with non-Christians and opportunities to share the Gospel.



Realize, I believe in the importance of Christian fellowship, but *connecting to a church* doesn't mean *disconnecting from the world*. Often, we become so worried and fearful of the world infecting us with evil (and our kids), that we don't cultivate opportunities where we can affect the world for good. It's easier to hang out with Christians in a sterile, temptation-free church bubble than it is to rub shoulders with the lost - especially on their own turf. That's risky business.

*In fact, that's like Jesus leaving the halls of heaven and coming to earth - or like the guy who took a risk and reached told you about Jesus.* Maybe it's time for some of us to stop playing it so safe - and take a risk!

Just remember, *our enemy is not the sinner who doesn't know Jesus.* He can't change if he wanted - he lacks the power. Our enemy is the person who claims to know Jesus, yet stubbornly holds on to his sin and has no desire to change. Paul says the church needs to shun... not the *heathen*, but the *hypocrite*.

Verse 12, *“For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”*”

I get weary of pastors who are always eager to condemn the ungodly. They're always on their soapbox pointing out what's wrong with the world.

*What do you expect?* Why would we be surprised when sinners sin and the lost act lost? Our place is not to judge the world, but to love and reach the world.

*If the church wants to judge someone - why not start with ourselves.* Clean up the church, and we'll be a more winsome and effective witness. Then when God judges the world - hopefully, there'll be fewer to judge!

Chapter 6 deals with another problem in the Corinthian Church. Paul writes, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?”

The Corinthians had become so dysfunctional they were settling their grievances in the pagan courts.

And again, *Paul was appalled* by the horrible testimony this created. Who wants to join a group of folks so fractured they can't settle their own disputes?

Paul rebukes them in verse 2, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” In Luke 19 - the parable of the minas - Jesus promised the faithful servant, “Because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.”

When the Lord Jesus returns to Earth, He'll set up His Kingdom and reign for 1000 years. And apparently, those who are *faithful today* will *reign tomorrow*.

So here's Paul's logic, if one day we'll rule cities, why can't we solve our petty problems among yourself?

Why drag a brother before the pagan court?

Verse 3, “Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” This is a verse that always boggles my brain.

*Who knows the full extent of what it means?*

Psalm 8 tells us that man was created a little lower than the angels that one day he'll be exalted above them...

Hebrews 1:14 refers to angels as “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation.”

Apparently, one day I'm going to give my guardian angel a report card? *“Yo Gabe, where were you on Highway 78 when I had that fender bender?”*

It reminds me of the wife riding in the car with her husband, *“Aren't you driving a little too fast, dear?”*

The husband counters, *“Don't you believe in guardian angels? He'll protect us.”* Imagine, a speeding husband getting spiritual on his wife. She replied, *“I do. But you left him miles back.”* She apparently believed that angels drive the speed limit whether we do or not.

Exactly how, I don't know - but somehow we're going to judge angels. That's a heavy responsibility. Which obviously means that in the here and now, we should at least be able to settle our own differences...

Paul continues, “If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?”

If the Corinthians had a secular matter to decide, they would rush to recruit the help of their brightest and fairest-minded

folks to sort it out. Yet the disputes that were tearing up the church were being neglected.

Paul asks, “I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!” Paul is asking the Corinthians, *isn't there one wise brother you trust enough to judge between you?* Apparently not, it was as if they were taking their disputes before Judge Judy! The world was scoffing.

Paul says it would be better to avoid court and be cheated a few dollars; than go before a secular judge, and give the world the impression that Christians can't settle their own disputes. He'd rather a church member be cheated than the cause of Christ to be stained.

Verse 7, “Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves be cheated?*” Better to be defrauded and take a personal hit than to disgrace the name of Christ by taking a brother to court. We should be willing to *suffer personally* before we let Christ *suffer publicly*.

“No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do these things to your brethren!*” It was a shame what was occurring in Corinth. In most families, the unwritten rule is not to air your dirty laundry in public.

The worse thing to do for your marriage is to hash over your spouse's problems in a public setting. Don't chat up your husband's faults at the next ladies brunch.

The problem in Corinth was not that the Christians couldn't get along. As long as Christians are subject to their flesh, quarrels will occur. But we should be discreet and settle our disputes **in-house**. *The church* should moderate its own conflicts - *not the civil courts*.

Paul writes in verse 9, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators..." Here, Paul embarks on a list of lifestyles that will keep you out of heaven.

And first on his list is "*fornicators*." The Greek word is " *pornos*" - from which we get our term *pornography*.

This was a sweeping term that referred to any and all forms of illicit sexual activity... prostitution, adultery, living together before marriage, hooking up, friends with benefits, incest, pedophilia, threesomes, etc., etc.

"*Pornos*" included everything from seeing a pretty girl and thinking a lustful thought to grotesque bestiality.

*And sadly, the internet has made both available at the click of a mouse.* Paul is warning that if you keep clicking that *mouse* - if you continually and persistently indulge in these perversions you'll rot out your soul.

You get in a rut from which you may never escape.

Realize, Paul isn't saying that a person who is tempted and fails in a moment of weakness, can't inherit the kingdom of

God - that would contradict a host of other Scriptures. Jesus provides forgiveness.

But what he is saying is that a real relationship with God will protect us from an uninterrupted lifestyle of sexual sin. There's victory in Jesus. We can overcome.

Paul continues, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites..."

A literal translation of the end of verse 9 reads, "nor effeminate, nor abusers." He's referring to both the passive and active participants in a homosexual act.

Again, this doesn't mean a person who struggles with homosexual thoughts and tendencies can't be a Christian. *Not so...* Even if a person stumbles and falls to temptation, there is still forgiveness in Jesus' name.

But what it does mean is that the man or woman who accepts homosexual relationships as a legitimate form of sexual expression, and practices these behaviors, is void of repentance - and it's the unrepentant person who Paul says will not inherit the kingdom of God.

His list continues in verse 10, "nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." Again, what applies to homosexuals also goes for thieves, for greedy people, for alcoholics... Paul is saying if any person engages in the uninterrupted, unrepentant practice of sin; it's evidence that there's something wrong in their relationship with God. Though that person might say they're a Christian, the evidence speaks otherwise.

And notice again the weightiness of Paul's words. These folks "will (not) inherit the kingdom of God." These people won't be walking the halls of heaven!

I know these are hard words, so let me try and put this passage in what I think is the proper context...

1 John 1:8 is written to Christians. John tells us, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Nowhere does the Scripture say unless a Christian is perfect he won't make heaven.

All Christians sin at times - we stumble and covet our neighbor's stuff - or we lose our temper - or drink too much - sometimes it's a sexual sin. But we don't do it perpetually! We stop, we repent, and get back up.

But in 1 John 3:8, the same John who wrote, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," also writes, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." The idea is that a believer, born of God, can't continue in sin. He can stray or slip, but God's Spirit will recalibrate his course. Conviction comes and nudges him back into God's will

An unbeliever occasionally slips up and does good, but he's a sinner at heart, and sin colors his path.

Whereas a believer might slip up and sin, but God's Spirit lives in him. Love for God and others shape him.

Paul is essentially saying that when a believer sins it is "out of character" for him - whereas when a life is lived hostile to the will of God, it won't inherit heaven.

Verse 11 - *and I love the first six words in verse 11* - these are perhaps the most hopeful in the Bible.

Paul writes, **“And such were some of you...”**

This is one of the most grace-soaked and blood-bought lines in all the Scripture... Apparently, the Corinthian church consisted of former fornicators, and ex-adulterers, and recovering idolaters, and homosexuals, and sodomites, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortionists... The Corinthian Christians didn't come from good, moral upbringings. These weren't former Boy Scouts and Brownies. They were a wild bunch.

But notice the operative word **“were.”** That was all in their past now. In Christ, they'd become a **“new creation.”** Later Paul writes, **“old things are passed away, behold all things have become new.”** That's the Gospel. Jesus turns the *hellions* into *heirs of heaven*.

Paul writes, **“But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”** I love this...

*“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified...”* Look at how Christ has changed you!

You were *filthy*, but you've been **“washed...”**

You were *worthless*, but you've been **“sanctified...”**

You were *guilty*, but now you've been **“justified...”**

He's *cleaned us - elevated us - and forgiven us.*

In verse 12, Paul documents **the Christian Ethic.**



The Jews have Ten Commandments. Islam has Five Laws. And Christianity also has its dos and don'ts.

Here's the moral code by which *all Christians*, in *all cultures*, at *all times* should live - and it is shocking, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Talk about a loose and permissive code of conduct... "All things are lawful..."

Hey, the person who accuses Christianity of being strict, and repressive, and legalistic hasn't read verse 12. Christianity has are no taboos. *Anything goes*. How can you get any freer than "All things are lawful..."

Yet read the rest of the sentence, "...but all things are not helpful." The Christian is free from Law - from lists of dos and don'ts. God has made it simpler. Rather than *governed by law*, he wants us *governed by love*.

Here's how Christianity works... rather than God assigning rules, He sends His Spirit to rule over us.

He changes us from the inside out... *our hearts first*... Whereas, once our nature was to buck God and beat out others, now the Holy Spirit supplies us a new nature - one that loves God and loves our neighbor.

The issue by which the Christian judges a deed is no longer "Is it lawful?" but "Is it helpful?" "Will this activity deepen my love for Christ, and benefit my brother?"

The *decision-making filter* is no longer law, but love.

Laws are like a leash on a wild dog. They choke the dog from doing what he wants to do. Whereas, Christianity

doesn't need laws and leashes. We've been transformed from a dog into a child of God. It's now our nature to love others and glorify God. The goal for us is to get our behavior in line with our nature, not force our behavior to do what's contrary to our nature.

So Paul writes, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Here's the Christian concern when it comes to our conduct.

Since Christ died to *make me free*, my priority should be to *stay free*. Thus, anything that threatens to take away my freedom - and impose bondage - is sin to me.

In other words, **if I'm not free to put it down, then I'm not free to pick it up.** Again, here is the Christian ethic according to Paul... **I'm free to participate if it's helpful and if it doesn't rob me of my freedom.**

Take alcohol for example. You're free to drink a glass of wine, as long as you're free to stop after one glass.

Some people have a physiological propensity that makes them addictive to alcohol. In fact, I've heard it's as high as 1 out of every 8 people. Well, if that's the case with you; then it's a sin for you to take the first sip.

If you can't stop at one, you're not free to have one.

This is the only rule for a Christian... **Do what you want as long as you don't fumble away your faith, or cause your neighbor's faith to stumble.** The Christian isn't governed by Law, we're governed by love!

Verse 13, “Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them.”

I suppose not *smoking a cigarette*, and not *eating lots of red meat, and fatty foods* has some health benefits. It keeps your lungs clear and arteries open, but Paul is saying that in the long run, **we're all dead.**

The dead guy who was healthy an hour before he got hit by a truck and the dead guy who was sickly an hour before his body finally expired are both equally dead.

The ancient world was full of dietary and ascetic restrictions that supposedly made you better than other people. But here, Paul tells the Corinthians that neither *feasting or fasting - kosher or non-kosher - cholesterol or no-cholesterol - gluten or gluten-free* - has zero impact on your status with God or your eternal destiny. God ultimately destroys both the stomach and food.

But the Corinthians had mistakenly taken the same attitude toward sex. The Corinthian logic is like that of today, “I've got a hunger drive, a thirst drive, a sleep drive, a sex drive - so since it's not a sin to eat anything I want, or drink anything I want, or sleep anytime I want - it must not matter to God then, if I have sex whenever and with whomever I want.” That was faulty thinking, but it was Corinthian thinking!

And for the remainder of the chapter, Paul offers his correction. He writes, “Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.” Here's Paul's logic... The Lord isn't all that interested in *what you do to your body* - you can take care of it and live

to 100 - or eat potato chips and drop dead at 40. That's not God's chief concern. He'll resurrect and perfect your body one day anyway.

**What you do to your body is not nearly as important to God, as what you do with your body!** This is what matters to God! As Paul said to the Romans, your body is an instrument for righteousness.

Verse 15, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not!” Yet this is what happens when two people have sex outside the security of heterosexual marriage.

You've become a harlot. You sell your soul... *if not for money...* you do it for a night of pleasure and lust, or for the acceptance of another person - etc. etc.

He continues, “Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “*the two,*” He says, “*shall become one flesh.*” But he who is joined to the Lord is one *spirit with Him.*” Understand, unlike eating, and drinking, and sleeping - sexual activity carries with it deep spiritual connotations.

Sex isn't just another bodily function. It's a *spiritual act* as well as a *physical act*. It symbolizes and impacts eternal relationships - even our relationship with God.

**I like to think of sex as super glue.**  
**It creates an unbreakable bond. Try to pull an item apart after it's been superglued and it doesn't separate as easily as it joined. In fact, there's some ripping and tearing - not just at**

the point where the two parties touched - but the tear goes deeper and broader.

And this is what happens with sex. It doesn't just interlock two bodies, but whether you realize it or not, the sex act fuses together to two souls - two spirits. And when they separate there's emotional tearing.

A man once wrote a letter to Ann Landers seeking advice. She posted it, "Dear Ann, I've been sleeping with three women for several months. Until a few days ago, none of them knew the others existed. Things were fine. By chance, two of them met, compared notes, and found me out. Now they're furious with me. What am I going to do? P.S. Please don't give me any of your moral junk. Signed, Trapped."

Ann replied, "Dear Trapped, The one major thing that separates the human race from animals is a God-given sense of morality. Since you don't have a sense of morality, I strongly suggest you consult a veterinarian."

Tragically, today's society mistakenly sees human sexuality as little more than animal instinct - but the sex act carries with it profound spiritual implications.

When you become a Christian, your body is no longer your own. It's the property of Jesus - *literally, the Body of Christ*. His Spirit dwells in your spirit. Verse 17 says, "*He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.*"

That means if you engage in any form of sex outside the boundaries of heterosexual marriage you are prostituting Jesus' body. You've sold out fidelity to Jesus, for the cheap thrill of a moment's pleasure.

*When a believer logs onto a pornographic website, you've logged the body of Christ onto that website...*

*For a believer to climb into bed with another man's wife, you've pulled the bed sheets over the body of Christ... When a believer walks into a strip club, it's the body of Christ you've escorted into that strip club...*

Participate in sex outside marriage, and you're not just risking *emotional rejection - or an STD - or an unwanted pregnancy - or AIDS...* More importantly, you violate the spiritual bond between you and your Lord.

If you're one spiritually to Jesus, why would you defile that union to be illicitly joined to someone else?

Sex outside of marriage betrays the fidelity between Christ and His Body. And that's why Paul writes to the believers in verse 18, **"Flee sexual immorality..."**

A teenager once asked his grandfather, **"Gramps, your generation didn't have all these venereal diseases. What did you wear to have safe sex?"** Old gramps answered, **"Son, we wore a wedding ring!"**

Recall Joseph in Potiphar's house. Mrs. Potiphar was wearing an item out of the Victoria Secrets catalogue. She dropped her bathrobe right in front of him. Nobody was home. No one would ever know.

Joseph stood there in shock... I'll bet his pulse raced. His hormones surged. She threw herself at him and grabbed his cloak. She started to undress him, as she invited him, **"Lie with me."** *And what did Joseph do?*

Genesis 39:12 tells us, "He left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside." He got outta Dodge!

When the devil stirs up a desire, and temptation makes a pass - recall Paul's words and Joseph's example, "*Flee sexual immorality.*" Don't *sit* and try to *fight* - *split* and take *flight*. Preserve your purity at all costs. Don't defile yourself for a night of pleasure.

For "Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." Realize, every person's core identity is tied to some degree to their sexuality. Maleness and femaleness is a part of it, but it goes even deeper.

Our capacity to reproduce ourselves is tied to our sexuality. That's not true of any other bodily function...

What I put in my stomach sustains me, but it has nothing to do with me multiplying my likeness. That's why watching me eat has no bearing on my identity or personality. But if you saw me naked, I would blush.

Instinctively, we realize that's a far greater deal.

And this is why every time you're intimate with someone, you give a part of yourself away. You break off a little piece of yourself that you can never get back.

As Paul says, you share your spirit. When you give yourself away with no guarantee of a forever return, it cheapens and degrades you. This is one reason why Paul says sexual sin is a "*sin against your own body.*"

Allow yourself to be *used as a plaything* over and over rather than be *valued as a person* - and it ultimately devastates your dignity and self-worth.

Illicit sex may produce *enjoyment and excitement*, but it doesn't provide *enrichment*. And that's why God created sex - to enrich the love of a marital couple.

Hey, sex outside marriage is like robbing your own bank account - what you've saved, your very treasure - gets stolen from you. You never see it again.

Whereas sex in marriage is like making a deposit into your account - there's safety and security - and the deposit becomes a long term investment that compounds interest and yields rewarding dividends.

Verse 19 sums it up, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*”

The Temple was God's OT habitation. The Temple had one owner - it was God's house - and it was for a single purpose - the service and worship of God.

And likewise, your body is the habitation of the Holy Spirit. It belongs to God. It was purchased by the blood of Jesus. And it has one purpose. You're NOT free to use it as you please. It too, is for service and worship!

Which is how Paul finishes Chapter 6, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Amen!