

Core Study #2

Addressing Sexual Conduct as a Christian

Passage: 1 Corinthians 5, 6:12-20

Themes: purity, resisting sexual immorality, living as good examples

Summary:

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul writes to the Corinthian church to confront them about sin in their midst: a man has his father's wife, something that is forbidden according to Old Testament law (see Leviticus 18:8 or Deuteronomy 22:30). Paul treats this sin seriously, asking the church to get rid of this "old yeast" (verse 7) and to live instead with the "yeast" of sincerity and truth (verse 8).

He asks the church not to associate with those who are sexually immoral yet claim to be fellow believers. He says to avoid even eating with those believers who are sexually immoral, greedy, those who worship idols and speak slander, drunkards, and swindlers. This is because associating with them could dishonor the name of Christ and cause unbelievers to question the character of the Christian's testimony.

He then finishes off Chapter 5 by saying that he has no business judging those outside the church, that is left to God. But the believer does play a role in judging those inside the church and in seeking to maintain purity and right living within the Christian community.

Chapter 6 begins with a passage where Paul condemns lawsuits among believers that are taken to the ungodly to be judged. Like the previous chapter, this one is all about being a good example to the world, living lives that are set apart from the world and are characterized by purity and godliness.

Verses 12-20 deal specifically with how Christian freedom relates to sexual immorality. It appears as though the Corinthian church had a wrong understanding of Christian freedom and sexuality. Some had wrongly interpreted freedom from the Law to the point where they felt free to be immoral. Although we are free from our sin, our bodies are meant for the Lord and are not to be used for sexual immorality. We are to be united with God and not with the world. We are to use our bodies to worship God (verse 17) because we were bought with a price and that price was God's only Son, Jesus Christ. Thus Paul tells the church to flee from sexual immorality - it is a dangerous and destructive force that pulls one's body away from worshiping God and towards worshiping selfish desires and the created rather than the Creator.

Leaders Preparation:

Read through 1 Corinthians 5-6 a few times after praying and asking God to reveal His Truth to you, taking note of repeated phrases and major themes. Write down any

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questions you may have about the passage, any words or sentences that you don't understand. You may want to look at a good study Bible or Bible commentary such as Gordon Fee's "The First Epistle to the Corinthians" to find the answers to your questions.

Some examples of questions you may want to ask yourself as you prepare your study:

- a) What do each of the sins mentioned in 5:11 mean? It would be a good idea to look up definitions for sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkard, and swindler.
- b) What do verses 12-13 in Chapter 6 mean? Why does Paul talk about food here, and what is permissible?

Here, Paul is probably quoting some Corinthians who were claiming that they could do as they pleased. They were likely saying that physical acts such as eating have no bearing on one's inner spiritual life, and were trying to use this to argue that promiscuous sexual activity doesn't affect one's spiritual life. But Paul declares that it does affect one's spiritual life: the body is intended for the Lord, and what one does with their body is important.

You will notice that there are an assortment of questions given below. You do not need to include them all in your core study, and should try to focus your study on particular ideas or portions of the passage. As you decide which questions to use, ask yourself what you think your core would benefit from most.

Introduction Question (selection to choose from):

- What are some character qualities that you feel a Christian should have?
- How would you describe "sin" to a fellow student? What are some examples of sin?

Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):

- Why is it so bad for a man to have his father's wife (5:1)? Why are the believers in Corinth told to hand this man over to Satan in verse 5? Does this seem a bit harsh to you? Why or why not?

It was hoped that in handing the man over to Satan (by excommunicating him from the church and allowing Satan to afflict the man as he pleases), the man would be caused such anguish that he would repent and forsake his wicked ways.

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- Paul is far from perfect (1 Timothy 1:15), so why is he able to pass judgement on the sinful man (5:3)?
- What does it mean to be sexually immoral according to Scripture?
You may want to look at the list given in 1 Corinthians 5:11 as well as other passages. To find other relevant passages, you can look up “sexual immorality” in a good Bible concordance such as Strong’s Concordance or you can type “sexual immorality” into the search engine at www.biblegateway.com.
- Did any of the sins mentioned in 5:11 surprise you? Stand out to you? Can you see any hints of these things in your own life or in the lives of those you associate with?
- Why are we told to flee from sexual immorality in this passage? Why is it so bad to sin against our own bodies?
There are a few reasons:
 - a) *The body belongs to God, and we must be careful how we use it. We must be careful not to separate our physical bodies from our souls or emotions and intellect because what we do physically affects the whole self.*
 - b) *The body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16)*
 - c) *The body will be raised at Resurrection. The resurrected body will be a new one, similar yet not the same as the one we have now (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)*
- What does the Holy Spirit have to do with how we use our bodies?

Response (selection to choose from):

- How can we honour God with our bodies? What things should we flee from here at UBC?
- How can we remain engaged in the world, but not be of it (5:10-13)?