

## Moral Issues

### *Sexual Immorality*

In 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul writes to Christians living in a city renowned for its immorality. Before its destruction in 146 BC, one of the main attractions of cosmopolitan Corinth was the pagan temple of Aphrodite. She was the goddess of love, beauty and sexuality. To honor her, one thousand sacred prostitutes roamed the streets of Corinth at night plying their trade and men solicited these pagan priestesses to worship the goddess. Among the Grecians, the sexually unfaithful man was known as “playing the Corinthian.” Quite understandably, this city was saturated with a reputation for sexuality and fertility rituals even after the temple for Aphrodite was destroyed. As one might imagine, this sex-crazed culture influenced members of the church. For this reason, Paul uses his first letter to the Corinthians to powerfully expose this problem. The examination of his writings on the subject will serve each Christian well. From this text, we learn...

**Sexual morality is between a husband and wife (1 Corinthians 7:1-5).** Paul merely paraphrases what was taught by God in the beginning and repeated by Jesus in the gospels (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6). In verse 2, he writes, “...let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Outside of a lawful husband and wife relationship, sexual immorality exists. For this reason, Hebrews 13:4 adds, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

With this in mind, Paul advises both husband and wife to show physical affection to one another (7:3). Even further, he asks each

marriage partner to submit to the other with regard to their body (7:4). The failure to do so, without mutual consent, could lead to further temptation (7:5). With this passage, God’s Word embraces sexuality in the proper context—marriage between man and woman. Thus, a sexually immoral union is any sexual relationship outside of lawful marriage.

**Sexual immorality is opposed for several reasons.** Starting with the end of 1 Corinthians 6, Paul demands Christians “glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (6:20). Some may argue, “It is my body and I will do with it as I please.” Yet, Paul argues, “Christ died to redeem your body so you must do as pleases Him.” Therefore, one reason Paul opposes sexual immorality is because it rejects Christ as Owner and Master.

A second objection to sexual immorality is its inferior union. 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 contrasts the physical and spiritual union and concludes, “...he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” One who unites himself physically to another person engages in a sexual relationship which will not last into eternity. Yet, one who enters into a spiritual relationship with the Lord is part of a union which will last through eternity. Which one of these two relationships should we seek in our lives?

A third objection to sexual immorality revolves around our purity. Our “bodies” are “members of Christ” (1 Corinthians 6:15). Further, we will be “raised” to be with Christ at the resurrection (6:14). Holiness demands a rejection of impurity.

Thus, we must remove past sin from our lives by God’s forgiveness and the possibility of future sin by repentance. One cannot be united to an impure “harlot” and a pure “Christ” at the same time (1 Corinthians 6:14-15). Sin and purity mix like oil and water.

A fourth objection to sexual immorality is its addictive nature. With regard to this, Paul argued he would “not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12). When one chooses to obey the lusts of the flesh over the fruit of the Spirit he chooses to let Satan have power over his body rather than Jesus. As Christians, we should stop being slaves to sin and be servants of righteousness (see Romans 6:3-18).

**Flee sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7:18).** The commands of God with regard to this sin could not be any clearer. One who refuses to hear this command should realize the eternal consequences of his/her actions (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). If these individuals are Christians, the church should disassociate these individuals until repentance is evident (1 Corinthians 6:9-13). After all, the tolerance of this sin among a congregation will only cause others to embrace it too (see 1 Corinthians 5:6-7).

If you are not a Christian, God can forgive you as he did those in Corinth who had once committed this sin. 1 Corinthians 6:11 joyfully exclaims, “...such were some of you. 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.” People can change. You can too.

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