

Everyone else is doing it

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[0 : 00] The reading is Genesis chapter 2, starting at verse 15, and that can be found on page 3 in the Bible.

So that's Genesis chapter 2, starting at verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for him. Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.

[1 : 17] But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man.

And while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Then the man said, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

The next reading is from 1 Corinthians 6, verses 12 to 20. And this can be found on page, either on page 1149 or 1150, depending which version you have.

[2 : 34] 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 12. All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other.

The body is meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

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 prostitute? Never.

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For as it is written, the two will become one flesh.

[3 : 41] But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.

So glorify God in your body. Well, there can be few areas of life, I think, where the gap between what our culture says and what God says in the Bible is greater than in this whole area of sex, relationships, and marriage, which 1 Corinthians chapter 6 addresses.

We live in a post-Christian society, and the remnants of a culture which has been shaped by the Bible are being rapidly dismantled. Sex is everywhere. In magazines, adverts, TV screens, online, it is part of everyday conversation, not just after the 9.30 watershed.

At first, I think these chapters look rather confusing. I'm conscious in our growth groups, we're a little bit further ahead than we are on Sundays. It's slightly confusing, isn't it? In chapter 6, it seems

there are some in the church in Corinth who, as we just heard, are visiting prostitutes, while in chapter 7, there are others who think sex is unspiritual and have stopped having sex even in marriage.

[5 : 17] A confused church in a confused society, not unlike 21st century London. And as a society which is confused about sex, the church is always going to battle to be distinctive and to live God's way.

So notice, really, right from the beginning what the main application is going to be of today's talk, because it's the main application of the passage. It is there in verse 18, flee from sexual immorality. But the thing I've been very struck by just over the last couple of weeks or so, and I wonder if you were struck by it either just now as Helen read it or in growth groups, is what the Apostle Paul doesn't do here in this chapter.

You see, depending on your view of Paul, you might expect him to come along with a big stick or wagging his finger and give a long list of do's and don'ts to the church in Corinth. You must do this, you must do the other, you mustn't do that, it's dirty, it's naughty, and so on.

But he doesn't do that. Instead, he says, do you not know? Three times. Verse 15, do you not know?

[6 : 30] Verse 16, or do you not know? Verse 19, or do you not know? Occasionally, I'll hear a comment, something like this.

I find sermons rather academic, rather intellectual, I just want sermons that tell me what to do. You see, as if God treats us like spiritual toddlers who can't be reasoned with and can only be given the very simplest of instructions.

But the way to tackle the half-truths and lies of our culture about sex and marriage and relationships is with the true knowledge of the gospel.

And so you see, what is it that Paul is doing in this chapter? Why, he does what he's done actually throughout the book. He applies the gospel, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the particular situation and circumstances that these Christians in Corinth find themselves in.

Indeed, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus frame these verses. So notice verse 14 speaks about resurrection, and God raised the Lord, and also will raise us up by his power.

[7 : 45] And then verse 20 speaks about the cross, for you are bought with a price. You see, the key to being distinctive as a Christian in this whole area of sex and relationships, as with any other area, actually starts up here in our heads with what we know and our understanding of the gospel.

And may I say, if you're here this morning and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, then we're delighted you're here. I very much hope that one of the things you're going to take away this morning is that the Apostle Paul, far from being anti-sex, as he is so often portrayed, actually has a much higher view of sex than we do in 21st century Britain.

It is a great chapter to be looking at on Valentine's Day, not planned that way at all, not by me, but this is the passage which the Lord has given us for Valentine's Day. So it's a great chapter to be looking at, and you'll see on the back of the service sheet, there are three headings.

First of all, the Christian's body will be raised by God the Father. The Christian's body will be raised by God the Father. In verses 12 and 13, Paul quotes some of the things the Corinthians seem to have been saying about sex, and it is astonishingly like 21st century London.

So first of all, verse 12, all things are lawful. Perhaps some were saying, Jesus has died on the cross, we're forgiven, we no longer have to keep all those Old Testament rules and regulations.

[9 : 18] I'm saved by grace, not by works. Surely I can live just how I like. But Paul adds to that, but is it helpful? Is it helpful for me?

Is it helpful for you? For others? He then repeats, all things are lawful for me, but he adds, but I will not be enslaved by anything.

Just listen to one writer. A few forces in life prove to be as overwhelming as sexual arousal. This powerful fire is easily lit and very difficult to extinguish.

Lack of self-discipline in this area quickly leads to addiction, so that sexual gratification becomes a prison. Not only is our relationship with the Lord broken, but marriages are ruined and families destroyed.

And many of us, I know in this room, will know all too well the power of sex to enslave, whether online or offline. Things we've had exposure to in the past, images, encounters, they stick with you, they revisit you, they enslave you.

[10:30] And then verse 13, food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other. It seems likely that all of that first half of verse 13 should in fact be part of the quotation.

The Corinthians, you see, simply think of their bodies as we think, well, as we think of one of these, a paper cup. It is cheap, it is disposable, you use it, and then you just throw it away, and you put it in the bin, and that's the end of it.

And so, what is their kind of thinking in verse 13? Well, if you're feeling hungry, then of course you gratify your hunger. You buy a burger and you're full.

If you have sexual desires, if you're feeling sexually aroused, then you gratify your desire. exactly the same thing. Sex is just another bodily appetite.

It doesn't matter what you do with your body. Second half of verse 13, but, says Paul, the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

[11:43] And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. In the New Testament, sexual immorality refers to any form of sexual stimulation outside of a lifelong relationship between two people of the opposite sex who have publicly committed to one another in marriage.

Anything else is sexual immorality. Your body matters, says Paul. It will be raised. It belongs to the Lord. In a recent program about celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church, two priests admitted both of them anonymously that they had been engaged with one night stands, yet insisted that these things simply had no significance whatsoever.

One said, it's just a bodily release. It doesn't affect the real me. another claim that he was still celibate in his soul. Paul rejects any such suggestions that bodily actions are in some way morally neutral.

I've sometimes heard it said by bishops that God is not very interested in what we do in our bedrooms. But the Bible gives no justification for such marginalization of what we do with our bodies as if it had no spiritual significance whatsoever.

Yes, we will be given new bodies at the resurrection, but the new bodies which we are given at the resurrection, they will be physical. In fact, it's how this letter finishes.

[13:25] Keep a finger in 1 Corinthians 6 and just turn on to chapter 15. Thank you. What if there's no resurrection?

Well, if there's no resurrection, then chapter 15, verse 9, if in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. If there's no resurrection, what the implications be for our lives and the way we run our lives and the way in which we live?

Well, verse 32, if the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. But if Christ has been raised from the dead, well, then what are the implications for the way in which we live?

End of the chapter, verse 58, therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Our bodies, you see, are not ultimately intended for sex, but ultimately intended for serving the Lord Jesus and will be raised on that final day, physical resurrection.

[14:46] Now, I take it that should be great comfort to those of us here who are unmarried. You see, despite what virtually every film and gossip magazine tells us, sex is not necessary for ultimate human fulfillment and purpose.

It's not what your body ultimately is for. Ultimately, your body is for serving the Lord Jesus and it will be raised.

Secondly, the Christian's body has been united with God, the Son. Back to chapter 6, 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 prostitute? Never. Just think for a moment with you some of the ways in which we describe being a Christian.

We talk about following Jesus, we talk about trusting in Jesus, we talk about believing in Jesus, we talk about having faith in Jesus. Now, all those things are true, but if that is the only way in which we think about the Christian life or what it means to be a Christian, then actually we are missing out a huge part of the New Testament's teaching, which is that we have been united to Christ.

[16:08] The moment we put our trust in Jesus, at that moment we become a member of Christ's body himself, a member of Christ. Christ. And therefore, you see, the point of verse 15 is very simple, isn't it?

Where you go, Jesus goes. What you do with your body, Jesus does. If you go too far with your girlfriend or boyfriend or with your colleague, the careless moment, the stupid mistake, what you see online, where you go, Jesus goes.

Verse 16, Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is written, the two will become one flesh, but he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

In first century Corinth, temple prostitution was a normal part of social and business life. So you might be invited to a dinner party at one of the many pagan temples.

They would sacrifice, the meat in the temple. They had dining rooms attached to the temples. And then you might partake in one of the sexual services offered afterwards. Now our culture is different, isn't it, than that?

[17:28] But it is not that different from that. So just think of the Ashley Madison scandal when it erupted last summer as the personal details were revealed of 37 million people in 50 countries of whom over a million were in the UK.

who had all signed on and paid to sign up to a website with a strapline, life is short, have an affair. Think of the adverts for holidays in Las Vegas which have been running on the side of London buses over the last few months.

What happens here stays here. Think of the entertainment that might be laid on for clients or colleagues. Think of what is regarded as normal at student parties.

think of the trail of devastation caused by internet pornography. But if you are united to Christ then where you go Jesus goes.

Sex is far more you see than a physical act. It's why in verse 16 Paul quotes from Genesis 2 verse 24 from that first reading which we had because according to the Lord Jesus himself Genesis 2 gives us the template for marriage for all time.

[18:46] I printed the verse on the outline in full. Genesis 2 verse 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

Marriage notice is heterosexual. We saw that last week. the purpose of marriage you see is it joins two people together and makes the two people one flesh.

The purpose of sex is that it unites people at the deepest level. It does so physically emotionally psychologically. That's why the order is so important.

It's why sex comes after marriage not before marriage. Because if I am to expose myself to another person at that very deepest level, why the only safe context for doing that is within the context of lifelong trust and commitment that is marriage.

It's clear therefore isn't it that if we are not ready to make that lifelong commitment in marriage to another person then actually we are not ready to have sex with them either. That's why Paul says at the end of verse 18 that the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

[20:13] You see there's no such thing as safe sex outside of marriage. There's no such thing as casual sex. That is a contradiction in terms. Now I'm very conscious there will be those of us here this morning and to be honest we have treated our bodies as that cheap disposable paper cup or perhaps we feel we've been treated by others as if we were simply a cheap disposable paper cup.

We know all too well that other sins simply don't leave the same emotional psychological and sometimes physical scars as sexual immorality.

That's why of course divorce is so painful isn't it? Because it tears two people apart who have become one flesh. I hope you can see that Paul's view of sex is far more enlightened than ours in 21st century Britain.

Perhaps you're just looking in the Christian faith. Perhaps you've always assumed that the Bible and perhaps Paul in particular is anti-sex. but far from it. What would Paul's diagnosis be I wonder of 21st century Britain and our view of sex when sex education programs simply amount to putting children on the pill and handing out free condoms all in the name of safe sex?

Well surely he'd say wouldn't we that actually we don't value sex enough. That we don't have a high enough view of sex that we see it as a cheap disposable item rather than the precious one flesh union that it really is.

[22:02] So what is the application when it comes back to verse 18? Flee flee from sexual immorality. Perhaps you've been on the beach the waves rolling in and you played how close can we get to the waves.

That kind of thing sadly is endemic I think in our Christian culture. How close can I get? How far can I go? How long can I kiss for?

What sort of a kiss? When does a kiss become more than a kiss? When does a cuddle become more than a cuddle? When does catching the eye of a colleague become more than simply catching their eye?

When does a comment or conversation become more? You see our way of thinking is completely the opposite of fleeing. When Rachel and I were going out I quickly discovered she got very nervous if ever we walked through a field where there were bullocks or bulls and the reason was that once she had been chased by a herd of bullocks in the middle of the Pevensey marshes in Sussex when she was doing her job and the only way to escape was to leap into a dike and she ended up in mud up to her waist with this bull snorting at her from the other side of the fence. She fled. I've heard the story many times you've probably heard it many times as well but I've heard the story many times and not once have I been given the impression that at any stage she thought well how close can I get why don't I just slow down at this point and see precisely what the temperature is of the bull's breath as it comes out of its nostrils.

[23 : 47] I assume there are those in this room and we need to heed the warning to flee perhaps with the person you're seeing or going out with perhaps with a colleague you spend too much time with for many no doubt online.

I assume there will be those in this room and we need to help others and encourage others to heed the warning and to flee. Now notice will you that Paul is not simply addressing those who are under the age of 30.

It's obvious but I think many of us are surprised to discover that sexual temptation is no less of an issue as we get older. If you're under 30 you'll find this very hard to believe.

I remember very clearly assuming in my early and mid twenties that at least by the time I got to my late forties this would no longer be an area I was battling with. How wrong I was.

The Christian's body has been united with God the Son. Thirdly the Christian's body is occupied by the Holy Spirit. Verses 19 and 20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God?

[25 : 08] You are not your own for you are bought with a price so glorify God in your body. In the Old Testament the temple was the place where the very presence of God dwelt symbolically dwelling in the midst of his people but wonderfully everyone who has put their trust in the Lord Jesus and belongs to Jesus has his spirit dwelling in them really dwelling in them.

Imagine how your behavior might change if a respected friend was with you every moment of every day. Are there places you wouldn't visit? Are there conversations you wouldn't have? Are there things you wouldn't do?

A friend of mine has the mother-in-law test for what he and his wife will watch on telly and they come up with a mother-in-law test. If we wouldn't be happy watching this with the mother-in-law then actually it probably means we shouldn't be watching it.

How much more should the constant presence of God's Holy Spirit provide us with an even greater motivation for glorifying God with our bodies? How is that possible?

To be indwelt by the Spirit? Because verse 20 we are under new ownership we have been bought at a very great price the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 33] Last week the papers were full of the appointment of Pep Guardiola as the new manager of Manchester City Football Club who have paid 45 million pounds for a three year contract that is a lot of money bought at a very great price indeed so imagine the outrage if he continued to go back to his club Bayern Munich for a few coaching sessions once he has moved to Manchester absolute outrage if he did that you have been bought at a very great price well in a far greater way if we belong to Jesus my body is no longer my body to use it as I want to use it my life is no longer my life to serve myself I have been bought to serve Jesus at a very great price to glorify Jesus with my body which

I take it at least means there is no place for compartmentalizing our lives for living one life when I'm at church or with Christian friends or Christian family perhaps but then a completely different life at school or college or work or with a different bunch of friends or a different part of the family one of the great deceptions I think of the internet and social media is it allows us to think there are two parts to us in a slightly odd way but I think this works in other words there's the sort of part of us that exists in real time and real space and there's another part of us which only exists in cyberspace and

only really exists online I think you see it don't you in the way that people speak to each other or speak about each other online they say things to each other online that they never dream of saying to someone else face to face and of course they see things online and watch things online which they never dream of doing so face to face notice again what

Paul doesn't say he doesn't say you need to have more to experience of the spirit to flee temptation sadly many Christians I think do look to those things as being the sort of key or the magic they need to help them flee Paul simply says do you not know it almost seems rather unspiritual do you not know but as so often the Christian life it's not that we need something more from God it's that we need to understand and grasp what we already have that we are those indwelt fully by the spirit and so we need to allow the spirit to grip us through his word to lead us and then as he does so to keep in step with the spirit in our lives so that we glorify God with our bodies now my assumption every Sunday is there are two types of people at Grace Church the first are those who take their sin lightly and perhaps in the back of their minds or perhaps in the front of their minds been thinking for the last 20 minutes or so I'm glad we're looking at 1 Corinthians 6 this morning it's very helpful for other people but it's not talking about me and my situation it's talking about other people's problems I think it's a category I can easily find myself in which case we need to notice for ourselves what the main application is of 1 Corinthians 6 the first main application we looked at last week verse 9 do not be deceived the second flee from sexual immorality and the positive of that verse 20 glorify God in your body what is the danger the danger is we'll be deceived we won't flee so we need to ask you see are there areas where we are being deceived are there areas where we are not fleeing where we should flee yes there may be a place for internet filters there may be a place for prayer triplets and so on but first and foremost it boils down to what we know and understand of the gospel these would be great verses to learn to put on the front of your screen your phone or laptop or whatever verse 15 would be a great verse to learn wouldn't it do you not know that your body is a member of christ verse 19 would be a great verse to learn do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy spirit within you whom you have from god you are not your own understanding in our heads but then grasping in our hearts the second type of person who I assume is always here every Sunday is the person who can make light of the fact that they are forgiven and perversely I can often find myself in that category as well in which case we need to remember verse 11 which we looked at last week and such were some of you but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God we need to remember verse 14 and God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power and we need to remember verse 20 for you are bought with a price so glorify God in your body ass thanks Tolers grandson co see God cuz degree STAND■■■■ together JDesque executive connector