

Introduction:

- A. You've no doubt heard the expression, "My body is a temple." Not from me, but you've heard it somewhere. I saw a book with that title on Amazon. It was about yoga. The blurb said it would "*encourage readers to listen to and honor the body; to enter more fully into their lives as they are, here and now; to see that each moment contains a Divine blueprint for success; and to reclaim the bricks, mortar, raw materials and energy....*" I don't even know what that means!
- B. There is only one way that statement can be true. We're in a series about the role of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. Please turn to **1 Cor 6:12-20**. The theme of this passage is the *body*. The *body* is mentioned eight times. The Holy Spirit is only mentioned once, but it is profound. **[Read vv.12-20...]** **V.19**, "*Do you not know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?*" **The only thing that makes a person's body a temple is if God lives in it. Otherwise it is just a travel trailer where your soul lives.** (Here's yours. Here's mine. Still just a travel trailer.)
- C. In Paul's day, Corinth was a very dark and debauched city. It was a city on sensual overload. Prostitution was woven into religion so it was not only acceptable, it was affirmed. Sex was a way of worship! Adultery was rampant. Chastity was seen as a curse upon a person whom no one wanted. So imagine trying to start a church there. Imagine how difficult it was to teach new believers what holiness involved.

It's not so hard to imagine, is it. I've read, "In a recent survey 29% [of adults] said they've had sex on a first date. Men have had an average of 20 sexual partners in a lifetime while women an average of 6. 65% of teenagers have had sex by the time they finish high school. Almost four in ten babies born in the U.S. are born out of wedlock." [PT.com, Mark Mitchell, "It's Just Sex"] **Christians are called to something far better but we must understand what the Bible says about our bodies.**

D. The reason Christians should think completely differently about our bodies—our physical bodies—is that we each are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Here is a radically higher view of your body than you will ever hear anywhere else. The passage begins with Paul addressing some ideas that he'd heard the Corinthians were using to excuse their sinful behavior. Here's the first point:

I. SINCE OUR BODIES ARE THE TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WE ARE CARETAKERS OF A TEMPLE NOT OUR OWN (6:12)

A. Apparently there was this saying in Corinth—maybe in the church of Corinth—“I have the right to do anything.” There is a certain wonderful liberty that comes to Christians. Our relationship with God is no longer measured by rule-keeping. So maybe they were thinking of that. But wherever they got the idea, that liberty and turned to license. They evidently used this expression as permission to sin, especially sexually. Look at the end of **v.19-20**:

“You are not your own; you were bought at a price.” God *has* set us free but that does not make us our own masters. The fact is, the only rights we have are those given us by the Lord who paid to redeem us with his blood.

B. No Christian has the right to say, *“I can do what I want with my body.”* It's not your body. It's the Lord's temple. So imagine we met with the Lord and he says, *“I've just made a temple out of your travel trailer. Here are the keys. I just have two requirements for the care of my temple:”*

1. Only use your body for what is beneficial for the Lord, you and others. Paul isn't primarily thinking here of physical fitness and healthy diets. He's thinking of relationships. This exact same exchange is repeated in **1 Cor 10:23-24** with this added conclusion, *“No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.”* The Bible is telling us that our rights do not extend to using our bodies as excuses for unloving, unholy behavior. Do you have that: **we must never use our bodies for unloving, unholy behavior.** That isn't

beneficial. Not *constructive*. That's temple caretaker principle #1.

2. Temple caretaker principle #2 is also in **v.12**: "I will not be mastered by anything." Our bodies are an unruly nursery school of spoiled appetites, like a bunch of two-year olds on a sugar. There are all kinds of physical tyrants: food (fine cuisine or just sheer volume), sleep, exercise, no exercise, adrenaline rushes, beauty and appearance, 'feeling comfortable,' sex, the high or the downer of drink or drugs. Every good appetite built into these travel trailers of ours would readily master us, given half a chance. The reason we cannot let that happen is not simply that it isn't healthy, but because we are not our own. We belong to the Lord. Only Jesus is to master us.

In our world, people are super-conscious of things that might be bad for us. Gluten, meat, caffeine, polyunsaturated fats, sugars... you name it. **But what is really unhealthy for your body is anything physical that overrules Jesus.** If your body gets what it wants, even though it is not beneficial to Jesus, you or others, you need to get back the keys.

A couple pages after this, in **1 Cor 9:26-27**, Paul likens our Christian lives to a decathlon. *"Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."* This isn't self-discipline merely for health, or appearance, or a positive self-concept. We must enslave our physical appetites to assure our spiritual vitality and service. The desires of the body can destroy our spiritual lives.

SUMMARY: The Bible doesn't require that we all be fine physical specimens. These verses aren't slogans for health food stores or gyms. But caretakers of the temples of the Holy Spirit have these two standards: (1) **only what is beneficial in serving Jesus**, and (2) **no other master but Jesus**.

II. SINCE OUR BODIES ARE THE TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHAT'S A BODY TO DO? (6:13-17)

- A. **V.13** has another of those Corinthian adages, “*Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.*” Meaning, of course, that physical indulgences didn’t really matter in the long run; that physical masters don’t matter spiritually. That saying was not just applied to food but also to sex. It evidently became an excuse for Christians involved in sexual immorality. “*It’s no big deal,*” they’d say. “*They’re just bodies destined for graves.*” That view is still around. **Hugh Hefner**, founder of the Playboy empire, now an old and doddering hedonist, wrote, “*Sex is a function of the body, a drive which man shares with animals, like eating, drinking and sleeping. It’s a physical demand that must be satisfied. If you don’t satisfy it, you will have all sorts of neuroses and repressive psychoses. Sex is here to stay; let’s forget the prudery that makes us hide from it. Throw away those inhibitions, find a girl who is like-minded and let yourself go.*” (#3957)
- B. It quickly becomes obvious that Paul isn’t just thinking about food here: v.13b, “*The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.*” It wasn’t gluttony that was killing the Corinthians. It was sexual immorality. By ‘sexual immorality’ Paul specifically means **sexual relationships outside of marriage**. Body to body sexual activity with someone not your spouse. (And Paul explicitly means a spouse of the opposite sex.) Remember the principle: *Only what is beneficial. Sexual immorality is not beneficial because it is not what the body is made for.* The human body was not created to thrive through sexual immorality. Hugh Hefner is upside-down wrong. Furthermore, sexual immorality isn’t just breaking a moral code. It is terribly bad for the body—far worse than too much sugar or not enough sleep. **Sexual immorality dis-integrates your body from your soul.** It pulls us apart at our very core. *Nothing is worse for your body than sexual immorality!*

- C. As Christians, our bodies are in this reciprocal relationship with the Lord. “*The body... for the Lord and the Lord for the body.*” God isn’t just *for* beautiful, fit, healthy bodies. He’s *for* Christian’s bodies, no matter what condition they’re in. It isn’t just our *hearts* that the Lord wants, but also our *bodies*. But the other part of the blessing is that the **Lord is for the body**. What’s that mean?
1. **V.14**, “*By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.*” Do you see the contrast? The adage said, *the body for sex and sex for the body, because our bodies will end in the grave.* But that’s all wrong. “*The body for the Lord, and the Lord for the body, and the body will be resurrected to live forever.*” God will *not* destroy our bodies. He will resurrect them. Later in this letter, in **1 Cor 15:42-44**, Paul uses seed language, “*The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*” **You bet your life the Lord is for your body! Because the Lord is for our bodies, our bodies will be resurrected to eternal life.**
 2. **V.15** brings up another reason: “*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?*” That’s kind of mysterious. Our bodies are something like limbs or organs of Christ. It is both literal and spiritual talk. Our bodies do not just belong to Christ, they are part of Christ. *Illus.:* I imagine someone who has had a transplant of a heart or lung or eye might think of their responsibility to the donor. I think this is something like that, only that we’ve been transplanted into Jesus.
Because the Lord is for our bodies, our bodies are transplanted into his.
- D. That said, think what this means for Christians involved in sexual immorality. **Vv.15b-17...** This speaks of prostitutes specifically because prostitution was so widely accepted in Corinth, but it applies to any sexual relationship outside of marriage.

So follow this logic: Your body is the very seed of your immortal body and part of Christ himself. In a sexual relationship your body is part of another person. The Bible's first and most basic word about sex is, "*the two will become one flesh.*" That is both a physical and a spiritual union, no matter if you think of that or not. It is the way we were created. **So when your partner is not your spouse, where does that put the Lord? Sexual immorality for a Christian puts the Lord in that unholy situation.** It is **sacrilege**—God's temple defiled by profane use. What's more, it is **damaging**—to your relationship with the Lord, to your own body, to your spouse, *and* to the partner. It's one thing for this to happen with a prostitute or a one-night-stand. But think of the disconnect when someone says they *love* their partner. Could anything be more *unloving* than putting another person, no matter how willing they are, into this dis-integrating, destructive, sinful sexual relationship?

III. SINCE OUR BODIES ARE THE TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE OBEY TWO COMMANDS (6:18-20)

- A. **V.18, "*Flee from sexual immorality.*"** "Flee" is a strong word, isn't it? Flee is what you do from a burning building, what you do from a mugger, what you do from a hurricane. Are you in an immoral relationship? Run as if your very life and welfare depended on your escape. Are you tempted toward such sin? Run! From the person, from the environment, from the triggers that tempt. Are you involved in impersonal sexual sin--fantasies, pornography, movies... anything that seem somehow safe because there is no other flesh-and-blood person? Run, run, run! Put distance between you and all those secret sins.

Notice the reason that follows: "*All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.*" Sexual immorality isn't victimless. Your own body is your victim! You abuse your own body. You tear your body from your soul, and from Jesus. Your body becomes a desecrated temple.

B. **Vv.19-20...** The second great command here is honor God with your body. If necessary, begin by repenting—admitting and turning from any sexual immoral relationship. Ask God for cleansing. **A wonderful gospel truth is that it honors God to be asked for forgiveness. It honors God to trust him for cleansing.** Use Psalm 51 as your pattern for prayer, because it is how David brought his sexual immorality to God for cleansing.

How else do we honor God with our bodies?

- Enjoy God in the physical things of your life as God’s gifts. God is pleased when things are pleasing to the eye and ear, taste and touch. Include him. Thank him.
- Put your body to good work—work that ennobles and helps and graces others. Work hard. Serve others. Never use your body in ways that hinders the faith of others.
- Be tough on the rebels in your body—those things that too often master us and displace Jesus.
- Honor marriage as the only God-given environment for sexual relations.
- Submit the weaknesses of your body to God to show his great power. *“We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”* (2 Cor 4:7)