

Week 11 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Text: 1 Cor 6:12-18¹

Icebreaker: What different attitudes or perspectives do you see represented in our culture today regarding the value or purpose of our physical bodies?

This question is similar to the application portion of question 3 below. To get you thinking, you might consider how our same American culture is known for being both fitness obsessed and overweight. Some seek to do whatever possible to delay or mask the aging process while others take little care for diet and exercise even while young. Within the church, these kinds of divergent attitudes can be found as well.

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

2. In verse 12, Paul expresses the general idea that some things should be avoided or at least limited even if they are technically lawful. What reasons does he give?

If we take the ESV's quotation marks to be accurate (see the footnote below), Paul's response is that not all things that the Corinthians are free to do are helpful and that some things might even end up controlling them.

Application: What harm can occur when people exercise their rights or freedoms without restriction? Think both in terms of individual and community-wide problems.

For example, what would happen if everyone in your group decided to answer this question at the same time (maybe that's not hypothetical ☺)? Each person's "right" ends up hurting others. For an individual, it might be perfectly ok to eat ice cream after each meal but it might not be helpful. It might be morally acceptable to drink 5 cups of coffee every day but eventually you might find yourself in a position where you can't go without 5 cups of coffee every day.

3. Verses 13-20 are meant to correct the Corinthians' understanding of the value of their own physical bodies. Why is the physical body valuable according to these verses?

In order, our bodies are for the Lord (v. 13), God will raise our bodies someday (v. 14), our bodies are members of Christ and are joined to him (vv. 15-16), our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19), and they are meant to glorify God (v. 20).

Application: Do you think our society under or over-values the physical body? Explain what you think according to what Paul is saying?

¹ This passage is commonly thought to include popular slogans among the Corinthians that are identified with quotation marks in our ESV text. The original Greek text does not have quotation marks because they weren't part of the language. English translations sometimes disagree on where a slogan might begin and end. **Leaders—Suffice it to say that while there are challenges in how to interpret the details of this passage, the overall message is clear. Namely, our physical bodies matter to God so what we do with our bodies matters. Sexual immorality is a misuse of God's design for our physical bodies and it has spiritual consequences since God's Spirit indwells our physical being.**

Again, this is related to the icebreaker above. Based only on appearances, it can seem that someone who is committed to a strict diet and exercise routine has a “high” view of the body. Meanwhile, another person might be more careless about diet and exercise and overall “upkeep” of the body. As we keep going through the passage, though, we will see that Paul has more in mind than just matters of diet, exercise, and physical “upkeep.”

4. Beliefs about the physical body can influence attitudes about sexual immorality. What reasons does Paul give for why sexual immorality—specifically, being joined with a prostitute—is wrong?

Our bodies are meant for the Lord, which relates to his final instruction in this passage: “So glorify God in your body.” God will one day raise our bodies so we should not think of them as just temporary and having no eternal value. This will be a major topic in chapter 15. Mixed in with this value of the body is the value of sex itself. Paul cites Genesis when he reminds the Corinthians that “The two will become one flesh.” Sex is designed by God to unite a man and a woman together in the marriage covenant. This unifying effect of two bodies becoming one occurs even when sex does not take place within marriage, which is why sex outside of marriage is a sin “against” the body. Other sins may harm the physical body as well (gluttony, drunkenness, self-harm, etc.) but sexual immorality is unique in that it violates a physical union of two becoming one flesh. Each “body” is harming the other body since the sexual union is occurring outside of God’s design.

Application: Verse 18 says that our proper response to sexual immorality is to “flee” it. What do you think this means? Practically, what are some ways we can do this today? It might be helpful here to think primarily about how we can avoid situations that lead to sexual immorality. One classic example of “fleeing” comes from the story of Joseph in Genesis 39:6-13.

5. Application: Because of what Jesus has done, our bodies are a “temple of the Holy Spirit.” How can this truth help us to live within the limits of God’s purposes for us in our sexuality?

A modern slogan is “It’s my body so I can do with it what I want.” This passage says the opposite. The Christian slogan should be “My body is God’s so I will do with it what he wants.”