**To the Church**

**Week 4**

Acknowledge mistakes in this area or nervousness

Prayer

***12*** *“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything.* ***13*** *You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* ***14*** *By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.* ***15*** *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!* ***16*** *Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”* ***17*** *But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*

***18*** *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.* ***19*** *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* ***20*** *you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*

Remember:

* The Corinthian church felt they had achieved enlightenment, and thus what they did with their bodies didn’t matter
* The secular Corinthians valued their sexual freedom
* One of the themes of Corinthians is how the gospel affects our everyday lives
  + This wasn’t just an ethical issue but the gospel was at stake
  + They misunderstand their freedom and they misunderstand the worth of the body
  + This has to do directly with the resurrection
* There are two principles I want you to keep in mind as we embark on this:
  + Your body matters to God.
  + You can’t perform any action that makes redemption impossible.

**V 12 -** *“I have the right to do anything,” you say - but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything” - but I will not be mastered by anything.*

* Paul here is quoting the Corinthians and engaging in the language of debate that they understand - not attacking behavior but refuting arguments w logic
* Christian behavior is not about doing what I’m allowed to do, but what edifies the lives of my brothers and sisters
* Don’t ask, “Am I allowed to do this,” but rather, “Does this behavior benefit me/make me healthier/bring me closer to Jesus?”
  + It is difficult to think this way but it’s something God wants us to grow closer to
* Sometimes we think we’re operating in “freedom” when really we are slaves to something - Paul says I WILL NOT BE MASTERED BY ANYTHING
  + I don’t have to live in slavery to anything, because my master is Christ and he leads me as a Father - with kindness and compassion and patience
  + Anything that tells us following Jesus will oppress us is a lie of the enemy
  + I have spent time as a slave to sin and I refuse to ever do it again. I don’t have to.
  + I can do anything I want, but I will not be mastered by anything except Christ

**V 13-14** - *You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.*

* This is another familiar saying to the Corinthians - well the food is for stomach and it’s fine because the body will be destroyed
  + This had to do with Jewish food restrictions - the believers knew that the Jewish law was now under Christ and they had freedom from it
  + The believers had to decide what things from the Jewish law applied to the Gentiles who were becoming followers of Jesus and there were basically two things - idol worship and sexual ethics - the early church realized that sexual ethics matter
  + Paul denies that freedom from Jewish food restrictions applies to sex
* The secular belief that had permeated the church was that it doesn’t matter what we do with our bodies because our body will be thrown away when we die
* Paul asserts that the resurrection isn’t just a metaphor, but that just as Christ’s body was raised from the dead, our bodies will also be resurrected

**V 15-17** - *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*

* Paul here reminds us about God’s purpose for sex
* Sex with prostitutes was socially acceptable in the secular culture, and thus had infiltrated the church
  + Something being culturally acceptable doesn’t mean its ok for a believer
  + Just because something happens in secret doesn’t mean it’s okay
* Paul uses the word “unite” to describe the act with a prostitute
  + The Bible is clear that when we become married, we leave our mother and father and become one with the person we marry
  + Sex is part of what creates this one-ness in marriage - it is designed to take us to a level of intimacy with someone that isn’t meant for other people in our lives
  + Paul paints for a picture that when we have sex, we put ourselves under the authority of the other person’s body
    - This is also a picture of healthy sexuality within marriage
    - Sex is supposed to be about being selfless and loving the other person, not taking for ourselves or using people or our own pleasure
    - Paul tells us here that when we engage in sex with someone, we are willingly putting ourselves under the authority of their body - if they are not also under the authority of Christ, we remove ourselves from the authority of Christ in order to unite our body with theirs
    - In a covenant relationship (marriage), this is a good thing - a reminder to us that we lay down our rights for the other person
  + If you’re going to join your body with someone else’s, they need to be destined for the resurrection
    - Outside of a covenant relationship we’re opening ourselves up to authority that is not meant to be there
    - Part of the power of the marriage ceremony is that you are making a public statement standing in front of your friends and family and saying, “I am going to engage sexually with this person, and only this person, for the rest of our lives.”
    - Sex is one part of a life lived to serve one another.
  + When you have one thing (the sex) without the other things (serving one another and long term commitment) things become warped
* NOW - one thing often missing from this conversation in church is talking about redemption
  + There probably aren’t many of you here who don’t feel some sort of guilt when we talk about this
  + I was taught when I was younger that once you break that - once you have sex outside of marriage or once you are unfaithful, you broke it, and that’s it. You have ruined your chances - that is not the gospel
  + The gospel is about restoration and resurrection
    - Through the power of God, Jesus makes all things new
    - It doesn’t matter how you walked in here today or what you have done, Jesus has the power to restore and resurrect your life in this area
    - When you give Jesus authority over you, nothing else can compete with that.
* Paul reminds us of marriage and says that sex makes one flesh out of two
  + But with Christ we are one in spirit - something that goes beyond the body

***V 18*** *- Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.*

* Paul gives us some advice here on how to stop sinning in this area
* FLEE - literally remove yourself from the situation. I believe fleeing in this area means two things:
  + Mentally
    - **What you feed will grow, what you starve will die**
    - The further I get into my relationship with Jesus the more power I have over sin - the harder I try to keep my ‘freedom’ in areas of sin, the more unbalanced I will be
    - Why make it more difficult for yourself ? leave your phone to charge in the living room / accountability software / Delete the dating apps.
    - **Don’t try to prove your strength - acknowledge your weakness**
  + Physically
    - Like literally get up and leave
    - Joseph and Potiphar’s wife - he had an opportunity to do something which was culturally acceptable (she was in a position of political power and he was a servant) but he physically removed himself from the situation
    - Confession - sharing with a trusted friend or pastor
      * Our stories often lose their power over us when we bring them into the light

**V 19-20** - *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;* ***20*** *you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*

* Here is what I want you to get today - your body has worth to God
  + Your body matters so much to God that he paid for its redemption, healing, and resurrection by giving the life of his Son
  + Your body matters so much to God that he indwells it with his Holy Spirit
    - The Holy Spirit doesn’t live in a church building or at the Novotel - it dwells inside each believer and among us when we come together to worship or encourage one another
    - If you are a follower of Jesus, your body right now is where the Spirit dwells - even with your flaws and mistakes
      * The Spirit doesn’t leave you when you make a mistake - he sticks with you and continues to believe in you
* **God has made us whole people and in the cross he redeems us wholly**
* **God gives us a taste of resurrection in our earthly life by bringing to life things that were dead and bringing healing to things that were broken. He makes all things new.**
* We don’t get this right and then come to God - we come to God exactly as we are and as we come into relationship with him we have access to His power because the Spirit dwells in us (1 Cor 2 - we have the mind of Christ)
  + V 11 - And that is what some of you were. 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.

Today:

* Become a follower of Jesus for the first time
* I need freedom in an area of my life - listen for what God is saying to you, ask forgiveness, walk in obedience