

1 Corinthians: The Body of Christ vs. A Body in Crisis  
New Pilgrim Baptist Church Bible Study  
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4/10/24

Unity Over Ethics (1 Cor 5-7)  
“Sinning Against Yourself” (1 Cor 6:13-20)

### **Historical Background**

Before the first century, ancient writers discussed “Corinthianizing” as synonym for promiscuity. It is not clear was used in Paul’s day. Paul was most certainly concerned with the sexual looseness of the congregation. He already addressed the young man who was sleeping with his father’s wife. He discussed, in more general terms, fornication as a function of adultery and same gender sexual behavior. Now, he comments with greater focus on these different concerns, mentioning them with regard to prostitutes. Prostitution is often called the oldest vocation in the world. It was certainly present throughout the ancient world including in Corinth. It appears that some believers were taking part in sleeping with prostitutes. Despite the fact that two consenting adults engaged in these activities, Paul condemns the behavior. He uses this kind of activity as a sight not only to discuss prostitution but also the larger issue of non-covenantal sexual relationships. For Paul, and Jesus I might add, the only form of legitimate marriage was between one man and one woman at a time (we will discuss this nuance next week).

### **Just because you can do it, doesn’t mean you should (vv. 12-13a)**

-Paul mentions what seems to be an axiom possible of the Corinthians. “All things are legal.” In other words, I can do anything. This may be because of the freedom in Christ or just something Corinthian believers thought made sense. The other axiom is “the belly is meant to take in food and food is for the belly.” But Paul counters both phrases. You may believe all things are legal but you should not be brought under the power of anyone but Christ. And, secondly, food may be for the stomach, but both food and the stomach will cease as we know them.

### **We are one with Christ (vv. 13b-17)**

-Paul turns the argument to express a truth about believers and non-believers. The body is not for our purposes but for the Lord. He will come back to this point again at the end. We cannot use our bodies just for our own sexual pleasure but for God’s will. The resurrection of Jesus will be our own if we heed this truth. As such, we are “members of Christ.” The word here, “members” is like a body part. We are joined to Jesus’s body, this is why we will be raised with him. What we do with our body, then, affects the one we are joined with. This is why we should not sleep with prostitutes. We become one flesh with the prostitute and mess up our connection with the Lord. Through faith in Christ, we are made “one Spirit” with him.

### **We are Bought and Paid For (vv. 18-20)**

Paul uses the imperative, “run away!” from fornication. He argues that essentially every sin is outside of the body but fornication is sin against one’s own body. This could be taken as against the body of Christ or one’s own individual body. I would suggest something in-between. When we commit fornication, we join ourselves with other people. We become one flesh in an illegal covenant which God has not blessed, since there is no commitment before God. But we are not permitted to do this because we are “bought with a price.” Jesus purchased us with his own blood, and we are commanded to submit our bodies to him. The only legal place for us to engage in intercourse is within the bounds of marriage.