

## Honoring God with Our Bodies

1 Corinthians 6:16-20

Discussions in our cultures used to be about sexual activities—premarital sex, relationships between people of the same sex, and concerns about pornography. All of these came out in the open due to the so called “sexual revolution” that took place starting in the 1960’s. It is one of the reasons why in 1900 6% of females participated in sexual activity before marriage while nearly 3/4ths do today.

But today the discussion is about the very nature of sexual identity. No longer can you just have lines to check for “male” and “female,” but also for other possibilities. A whole new vocabulary has developed with words like “agender,” “passing,” “transitional,” and “bi-nary.” “Male” and “female” are seen as stereotypes people have come up with which may identify most of the population, but not all.

Compare all of that with the view given in the Bible where in Genesis it says, “Male and female God created them.” Or look at what Paul says in our second lesson today—“Flee sexual immorality.” But who decides what that “immorality” is when it all is based on something that seems so outdated?

If we look honestly about the views about sexuality in our culture, so often it is a matter of what benefits “me.” If I am a young male, I want attitudes that allow a lot of freedom so I can act out my desires without getting into trouble for it. If I am heterosexual, then I can favor attitudes against homosexuality, because that is something that does not tempt me. That can be someone else’s “sin.” If I am older, I favor stricter rules because I don’t want society paying for all kind of pregnancies that stress our community and add to the burden of taxes. If I feel a particular way, then I want to feel free to act that way.

It certainly has been that way historically. As men dominated society, they made the rules to favor them. If a wife had sexual relations with another man, she was guilty of adultery even if the man was not married. But a man who was caught with a woman only had to worry if she was married. If not, he could take her as another wife or treat her as a concubine or mistress. They also controlled the youth so that they didn’t have to get their sons or daughters involved with undesirable spouses. A lot of that could be couched in talk about decency and

morality, but often it was to benefit the men in control.

When the sexual revolution came, it seemed to free the youth first. Then came feminism and liberating women. Then came those desiring same sex relationships, and now it is those who want freedom to decide their own sexual identity. We even see how young people today are more tolerant of premarital and alternate sexuality, but less tolerant of adultery. A lot of that is due to the fact that as people not yet married, they are not tempted that way and because they have been hurt by their parents’ adultery. But whoever we are talking about, it seems to revolve all around “me,” and what “I want.”

Into this discussion we hear the clear words of St. Paul: “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; you were bought at a price.” All our concerns about “me” in sexuality ignore the simple fact that “me” and “my body” aren’t mine. We belong to God. We are His. He not only made us in the first place; He bought us back with the ultimate price of His Son, Jesus, who died for us on the cross. And that includes our bodies. So God and His Word have everything to say about “me” and “my body.”

“My body” does not exist to please me. It is not about fulfilling what I desire. It is about being what Paul calls the “temple of the Holy Spirit.” God the Holy Spirit dwells in us. To see the significance of that we have to turn to the Old Testament and what the temple meant. God is God, therefore He is everywhere. But in His love for His people Israel He decided to be specially, uniquely among them. He gave them the Ten Commandments through Moses. They were written on two tablets. We normally think of two tablets because it took two to write them all out. But actually when ancient people made covenants like God did with people of Israel, they made two complete copies. Each copy was to be placed in the most sacred place of the two sides to show how serious it was to them. But both tablets from God were placed in the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle—the tent that was used before a permanent temple was built under King Solomon. God was saying that His most sacred place was in the temple where the people were. The

top of the ark was known as the “mercy seat.” This was the actual “seat” of the throne of God on earth.

So if our bodies are now the temple of God, then they are most sacred. Think of how we act when we go to Holy Communion. It is not something we do casually. We kneel at the rail. We often keep our heads down until the pastors or assistants come by. We return to our pews and pray. Why? Because this is sacred, this is a real encounter with the Holy God, who says, “This is My body. This is My blood.” In the same way our bodies are holy, sacred, special because God chooses to live in them.

God leads us to live our sexuality not to please ourselves, but to serve Him. That may sound like God is being selfish, but what does God do with the gifts we direct to Him? He gives them to others. We love God by loving others. Never is that more true than in our sexuality.

Sexual activity is not about pleasing me. It is about giving love to another person loved by God. God also uses that gift to bring about life to others as children are brought into the world, children He wants us to love. In our sexuality we seek not how to please me, but how to give to others. It is not giving to others to simply satisfy them sexually, not when that could lead to interfering with the future relationship they could have with a husband or wife or bringing someone into the world we could not care for. It is about using our sexuality to give to them in love. That might involve not be sexually involved when the relationship is not loving for others, but simply pleases the two of us. It is also involves the wonderful gift God has given us of male and female. When God created humankind in Genesis it says, “In His own image God created man, male and female He created them.”

Humankind is not complete unless there is male and female. That is why God brings them together in marriage. That is why we love one another better when we appreciate that we are both male and female. We can seek to learn more about what it means to be a man or woman, but also give thanks to God for the differences. In that we use our gift of sexuality to better love God by loving others.

So as we are involved sexually with another person, let us seek not what pleases “me,” but how to give to that other person. As we learn to identify who we are as man and woman, we can see that as a gift from God and as something we live out in service to others. For we are not our own, we were bought by Jesus’ death on the cross, the ultimate act

of love. We belong to God to love as He first loved us.

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