

Explore the Bible: Glorifying God

February 20, 2018

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for March 11 focuses on 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.*

Do you know people who have issues? Do you know churches that have issues? If you have any misconception about the Corinthian church's character, you need only begin reading Paul's words in chapter 5 to see the stories that reached his ears.

The physical sins of these people were deeply connected to their spiritual immaturity. As Preben Vang notes, "Christian faith makes no room for a separation of body and spirit" (Preben Vang, *1 Corinthians*, 84). Yet, the hypocrisy of these believers was being exposed to prove they were missing the call to holiness.

Since "believers honor God through holy living," ask your group what they think holiness means. Compare their answers to the legitimate meaning of holiness. Also, consider making note of 1 Peter 1:14-16 and how we are called to live for God. We need to discover what the Corinthians missed: Living for God is a lifestyle.

Focused on Christ's Lordship (1 Corinthians 6:12-14)

If there is anything we humans are good at, it is making excuses for what we want to do. These sayings of Paul possibly are sayings the people were using to validate their fleshly desires.

When we let our flesh win, who is the master? If our desires for food, drink and sex overrule our call to holiness, then who is really in charge? The point is that the lordship of Christ was being overshadowed by the tyranny of the flesh. Ask your group: *When we make excuses to do what we want, who is ruling us? Who is not ruling us?*

It is helpful to compare “understandable” to “permissible.” It may be understandable that our flesh desires what is not holy, but it is not permissible to avoid holiness and obey the flesh. *What are some other scenarios that comparing “understandable” and “permissible” may help us seek God’s leadership over our own?*

Perhaps we believe our bodies were made for us. Verses 13-14 contest this. Evidently, we were made for God, and so our bodies were made for God’s purpose. This is a point that must be driven home if we are to take holiness seriously.

Joined with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15-17)

Here is the uncomfortably sticky subject of sex. Let us not go too far in the gutter and think Paul only is referring to physical intercourse. His point is to look deeper at the spiritual meaning of sex and how it unites.

When we become one with Christ through salvation, there is a spiritual connection. Later in Ephesians 5, Paul also speaks to the mystery of marriage and how physical marriage between humans is a local view of a kingdom-sized marriage between Jesus Christ and his body, the church.

If human intercourse is a fleshly picture of uniting with Christ, why would we cheapen sex in an immoral way? The “one night stand” or “selling your body” makes absolutely no connection to the depth of what God meant

when he created sex.

With all this in mind, ask your group: *How do we cheapen what God meant to be meaningful? How does sexual immorality mess up our understanding of closeness with God?* Our bodies and how we use them could and should tell us a lot about God.

Bought with a Price (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

Perhaps you have heard someone say, “Don’t walk. Run!” This may be something a parent tells his or her child as they are trying to catch their plane. Perhaps you have heard a coach yell this to the slower or lazier of the athletes under his or her watch.

There is no need to explain that “flee” means a faster pace than walking away. However, there is a need to emphasize we should do just that when we encounter sexual temptation for what is not holy. Walking allows for meandering, and meandering leaves an opportunity to sin against one’s own body.

What sexual immorality is available to us today? What will running from it do compared to walking away from it? This all comes down to whether or not we want to “honor God” with our bodies. Our motivation needs to be God-centered if we are to care about this issue.

Center on Paul’s statement, “You are not your own.” *What does this mean to us? How does this change our plan for our bodies?* When we give our lives to God, we belong to him, so what we do matters to him.

Conclusion

Next week's lesson is a natural "part two" to this conversation about sexual immorality. So, let your group that the tension will continue, and it will be helpful. Our text today focused on sexual sin, but be sure to acknowledge 1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20 as a whole. We must know the Corinthians' issues were more than sexual immorality.

Holiness is such a misunderstood word. *Ask your group to give specific examples of how we misuse the word "holy."* This undoubtedly will reveal several funny examples as well as unconventional ones. *Ask how we can use "holy" in a better way so that we will not misunderstand God.*

One more idea: Propose "being holy" as "being different," which is not far from "being set apart for a purpose." As God is different from all gods, Christians should be different from all people. This is a positive thing that we should claim and seek. Taking time to be holy is a much greater investment than giving time to being unholy.

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