



Week 3 – Whole Body

*“²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.
May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)*

The Goal of today’s study is to bring a realization of why and how we serve God with our bodies. We will discover that based on the universal principles of ownership by creation or purchase, we belong to God, which includes our bodies. This has major implications as to how we treat our bodies given that they don’t belong to us, but that we are stewards, managers, or caretakers of another persons property, namely God’s.

It might be worthwhile to start off with a review. This can simply be accomplished by asking the group what they’ve learned the last two weeks. Alternatively you can review that we are made up of 3 parts, all of which are intended to bring reflect God’s image and bring God glory.

- 1. Spirit – the part of us that connects to God and the spirit realm. It is what is ‘born again’ at salvation (justification – a finished work). Intuition, conscience, and fellowship have been called senses of the spirit.**
- 2. Soul – the part of us that connects with humanity. It is what is currently becoming more and more godly (sanctification – an ongoing, progressive work) or less and less godly. It is comprised of our mind, will, and emotions.**
- 3. Body – the part of us that connects with the physical world around us. It will one day be redeemed and transformed (glorification – a future work), but in this age our bodies, even when growing, are constantly subject to death and decay.**

CONNECT

- What is the best thing you have done for your health?
- What is a regular regimen that you have for your body? A fun follow up is, ‘how strictly do you follow it?’
- What is one of the most expensive things you have purchased? An interesting follow up might be, ‘was it worth the purchase price?’ The point

of this question is ultimately to set them up for later discussion on buying and ownership.

WORD

"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. ¹³You 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. ¹⁴By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵Do 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! ¹⁶Do 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." ¹⁷But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. ¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹Do 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; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

1 Corinthians 6:12–20 (NIV)

THOUGHT

Although we are made up of three separate parts, spirit, soul, and body, they all have an affect on each other. Every high level athlete will tell you that what you eat and drink and how you sleep and rest all make a significant difference in how you perform athletically. Paul makes the point in our passage today that what you do with your body also affects you spiritually and vice versa. In today's discussion, we'll take a look at how what we do with our bodies affects our relationship with God.

DISCUSSION

1. Some of the Corinthians felt that what they did with their bodies had no bearing on their spiritual lives. What do you think about this?

Romans 12:1–3 (NIV)

"¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you."

The Apostle Paul, the most prolific and influential Christian in history, urged us to see what we do with our bodies as a form of worship to God.

2. In verse 12, the Apostle Paul makes a distinction between what we can do (what is permissible) and what we should do (what is beneficial). What are some examples of permissible versus beneficial in some of the following areas: food, work, speech, exercise, relationships?

Some examples to get things going if your group seems stumped:

Food = despite former Mayor Bloomberg's best efforts, you can drink as much soda as you want (permissible), but, enjoyable as it may be, if you keep drinking those jumbo soft drinks, they will wreck your health.

Work = you may not get fired for working at 50% capacity (permissible), but it's not likely to benefit your career or make you a friend of your bosses.

Speech = we all understand that the principle of free speech allows you to say a lot of things which can end up ruining a relationship or a reputation. Many political campaigns have been ruined by things being said which, although legal, were not always true, and sometimes ruinous to the campaign of the person who said them or their opponent.

Exercise = anyone who has watched 'The Biggest Loser' or made a New Year's Resolution to get healthier knows that you can skip or skimp on every work out, but that won't help you get in better shape.

Relationships = you may not go to jail for lying or saying mean things to the girl or guy you are dating or to your friend, family member, co-worker, or boss, but it won't make that relationship better.

3. In verse 13, the Apostle Paul brings up the topic of food. Food is essential to life and is a hot topic in our contemporary culture. We have magazines, television shows, even whole networks, devoted to food. Yet 1/3 of Americans are obese. Some people eat to live others live to eat. Which side of the equation do you fall on?

4. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." Why do you think God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral?

The discussion doesn't need to come to a 'right' answer here. Two topics that may come into play in this discussion are:

- 1) 'does God have a right to judge?' You can defer a definitive answer on that to the next question where it will be addressed. Simply say, 'we'll answer that in the next question.'
- 2) 'why is God (or 'why are Christians...') so hung up on sex. The answer to that is that sex is the most intimate act of marriage and marriage is seen as the ultimate picture or example of the relationship God desires between Jesus and the church. **Ephesians 5:25–30 (NIV)** ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰for we are members of his body."

Marriage is also the fundamental building block of society and community as God intended. Strong marriages lead to strong families which lead to a strong community.

The sex drive is also seen as one of the strongest drives humans experience and mastery of it is essential to maturing and developing strong character.

For these reasons, God has a lot of encouragement and instruction for us in regards to our sex life:

5. Almost every culture recognizes the principles of creation and ownership. If you create an art piece, write a song, or invent something, you own it. The same goes for buying and ownership, if you buy something, you own it. Scripture teaches us that God both created us and bought or redeemed us. What are the implications of creation and redemption in regards to our relationship with God and his commands and desires?

6. In verses 19-20, the Apostle Paul says, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies." This means that we are caretakers rather than owners of our bodies. How does this affect the way we see and treat our bodies?

God clearly desires that we should avoid sexual immorality. As caretakers of bodies that belong to God, we should act in a way that is consonant with God's desires.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (NIV)

³It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. ⁷For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit."

Why do you think the Apostle Paul especially emphasizes that we should "flee sexual immorality" in verse 18?

One of the key reasons is found in verses 15-17 of the passage above, 1 Corinthians 6, "¹⁵Do 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! ¹⁶Do 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." ¹⁷But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit." Sex has a powerful effect on us and our relationships. This has major implications for our lives.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

One of the most important aspects of applying what we've discussed today is the realization that the Holy Spirit is ready and able to help us in this area.

Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit. (²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness,

faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.") Purity in this area is extremely difficult without the help of the Spirit and can be hard even with the Spirit's help, but 'no pain, no gain.' A bit of difficulty in our lives only makes us stronger, like lifting weights. We never develop as humans if we do not learn to fight and persevere rather than just go with the flow and give in to our impulses. This is universally recognized. In the words of **Henry David Thoreau**, 'The path of least resistance leads to crooked rivers and crooked men.' It can be simply illustrated by the fact that babies cry and relieve themselves whenever and wherever they please, following their natural impulses, but as we grow and mature we learn to control those impulses. We need to learn to do the same with our sexual impulses as caretakers of these bodies God has given us to steward.

- Over the past 3 weeks we've looked at how God views wholeness regarding our spirit (spirituality), soul (mental, relational, & emotional state), and bodies (physical well being). During this week, take time to reflect on some personal things you may need to adjust spiritually, emotionally, and physically based on what you read today about honoring God with your body. Make a list of these in your journal.
- As you reflect on this list, bring out your calendar or planner. Looking through your daily activities this week, consider healthier options for your mind, body and spirit and put them into your schedule.
- Just as we need to feed our physical body healthy food, our spiritual body needs to eat right as well. Try reading or listening to the word every day for a whole week. This could be by reading or listening to the bible, a podcast of a sermon, etc.

PRAYER

- Ask God if there is anything you need to clean out of your temple.
- Ask God to show you whatever in your life may be dishonoring to Him as well as ways you could honor Him better with your body.
- Ask God to show you someone you could make yourself accountable to in regards to living a God-honoring life - spirit, soul, and body.

NOTES
