

## **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

### **Christians belong to God through the price paid at the cross and so we should live our lives glorifying him**

#### **State of the world**

Ask, who has a smart phone here?

What do you guys love about your smart phones?

All these responses are good, and yes I love those things as well, but I'm starting to think that the smart phone is possibly the most dangerous thing ever created.

The most dangerous part of course is its ability to search the internet for whatever we want to see, that one piece of technology means that anyone of us here could view millions and millions of pornographic images and video content wherever and whenever we want.

Pornographic images that could damage relationships with people close to you, pornographic images that could ruin your ministry or career, highly offensive child pornographic images that could send you to jail.

In less than 2 decades we have gone from the odd dirty magazines and sleazy strip club to the point we find ourselves now with every kind of pornographic fantasy right at our fingertips.

The people doing the research on the effects of pornography in our society all agree that the human race has never before had such access to pornography like we have today. The experts also agree that the material being watched is becoming more violent and graphic every year.

And more and more people every year are subscribing to this material on their phones and computers.

Here are some figures from McCrindle on how we are going with online pornographic material in Oz.

- Average age to view Hard core porn is 11 years of age and it's getting younger each year
- Up to 99% of men have viewed pornography at some point
- The figures are growing for the ladies as well, up to 86% of women have viewed porn
- 79% of people in our society think Porn is ok to view
- 40% of those people think it's actually good for you

#### **State of the church**

The church is not much better, I'm embarrassed to give you these figures about how church leaders are going with Porn.

- 57% of youth pastors and 41% of senior ministers use porn regularly
- And 75% of youth pastors and 64% of seniors say that porn has in some way had a negative impact on their ministry.

I think what's most disturbing is that the church and it's leaders and people are called to be the light of Christ to the world, instead all the world sees and takes real notice of is when Christian leaders are attending Royal commissions because they have acted in sexually immoral ways towards the most helpless and vulnerable in our society.

We live in one of the most sexually perverse era's and it's having a dramatic effect on our society.

Addiction to viewing porn is getting worse and its breaking families up, its destroying careers and ministries. Our children are growing up being sexualised from a younger age and those same children are growing up with a disturbingly wrong view of what sex is and what it's for.

And there are the actual victims of societies sexual appetite, the child sex industry is at all time high affecting up to 10 million children who are locked into the sex slave industry which is a major fueller for child porn and child prostitution.

We have managed to sexualize almost every tv commercial song played on the radio, and tv series, sex has become just a normal part of entertainment.

I don't know where you are at in your thinking about sex but these figures suggest that even in our church community we have a problem with the way we think about sexual purity.

**Point 1** – Wrong thinking about sexual purity

And so Paul's letter to the Corinthian church about their wrong thinking about sexual purity is I think relevant to us.

Now before we start with all the fireworks, let's work out what the Corinthian church might be up to that deserves Paul's attention.

We know from Chapter 5 verse 1 that we looked at 2 weeks ago that the church in the cosmopolitan city of Corinth has some real issues with sexual immorality, issues that have been reported to Paul.

Verse 1 says

*"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans. A man has his father's wife".*

Today's passage also makes a few claims of its own about the Corinthians sexual activity and their thinking when it comes to sex, and what's clear is that some of the church members have been involved with prostitutes.

Surprisingly though Paul starts the passage not by directly addressing their immoral behaviour as we might have expected but by directly addressing their wrong thinking and the slogans they live by when it comes to the way they treat their bodies and sex.

Paul says in verses 12 and 13. Which are on the screen.

*12 'Everything is permissible,' you say – but not everything is beneficial.*

*'Everything is permissible' – but I will not be mastered by anything.*

*13 You say, 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy them both'.*

*The body, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

Now the first slogan "Everything is permissible" is the Corinthians way of saying, they think that they are free from God's Old Testament Law and are now under God's grace and so are free to live however and do whatever they want.

The second slogan, 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy them both'. Is a bit harder to understand but basically the Corinthian church believed that the physical body and the spiritual body were completely separate and that only the spiritual body would be raised when Christ returned. The physical body they thought would not be raised but destroyed and so the Corinthians believed that they had the right to treat their bodies however they liked.

It's as if they thought their bodies were like a house with a demolition order on it, why renovate or make improvements if it's going to be torn down anyway.

Both of these slogans show us that the Corinthian church had the wrong way of thinking when it came to their bodies and sex, and it was this thinking that enabled them to live however they wanted.

A few years ago some of the younger Christian guys from my old church came up to me to ask what I thought the bible said about drinking alcohol and getting drunk. I quickly told them that the bible is pretty clear about drunkenness and that it was not something that Christians should do.

As soon as they got the idea that the bible said being drunk was not ok, they quickly moved to how many drinks they could possibly have.

They wanted some numbers to work with, can I have 3, 4, even 5 drinks they asked.

Sounds a bit silly, but actually all these guys wanted to know was what was permissible when it came to alcohol so they could have a guilt free, good time.

And we aren't too different when it comes to thinking about what is permissible in the area of sexual purity, just like the Corinthians and my young Christian mates we also justify our thinking so that we can treat our bodies however we decide.

You can justify watching the tv shows that have more sex scenes than story lines, by saying that you're an adult or everyone else is watching it, you'd hate to miss out on the Goss at the water cooler tomorrow.

What about the novel, the one with more sex in it than a late night sbs movie, the one that's hard to put down, but is easily justified by the thinking that it's not watching porn.

What about watching porn from the internet on the computer or phone, surely it's ok, it's not as if it's hurting anyone.

What's common to both the Corinthians and us is this, we both think wrongly about sexual purity and we do our very best to justify our thinking.

I think if I was in Paul's position I may have given the Corinthian church a new rule book regarding sexual immorality and told them where the nearest 12 step programme was, but that's not how Paul addresses the wrong thinking that the Corinthian church has when it comes to sex.

**Point 2** - Paul wants them to change their thinking to a right view of sexual purity.

And he knows more rules won't work because as we have seen the Corinthian church think they are not bound by rules. And Paul doesn't use harsh words either, instead he tries to change their thinking by appealing to their hearts and to what they already know.

Paul starts doing that by correcting the false slogans that the Corinthian church is living by.

At the end of their slogan "everything is permissible", Paul adds "but not everything is beneficial" and also "but I will not be mastered by anything."

By adding his corrections to their thinking, Paul points out to them that although Christians are free from the Law and are now under God's Grace, it doesn't mean that everything is beneficial for the Christian, Paul says they are not free to do whatever they please with their bodies or with their sexual practices.

And Paul continues to ensure they don't misunderstand his point when he adds.

*"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.*

Paul's words are a reminder that there is a purpose for the body, that it's not for misuse, not for sexual immorality or destruction, but for the Lord, and it will be raised again one day.

The Corinthians thinking was that they had the right to treat their bodies however they like, but Paul says No, your bodies are built for the Lord and for his purpose, and that purpose is to glorify God not themselves.

Paul next big push with his readers is to secure their hearts by reminding them of the good news that they already know.

He says in verse 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.

Paul wants his readers to be reminded of who they were joined to when they first believed, repented and received God's Holy Spirit.

The statement "Do you not know" from Paul is asking them to reflect on what they first believed, which is universally true for all Christians.

That when Christians believe, repent of their sin and trust in Jesus as Lord, they are actually united with him and he unites himself with them. Paul tells his readers this in verse 17.

he says *"But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit".* And verse 19 *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?"*

If that wasn't enough, Paul then backs up his concerns about their wrong thinking about sexual purity by reminding them what the Old Testament says is the right way to think about sex.

He says in verse 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".*

Paul is referring to Genesis 2:24 says

*"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one."*

Paul's point is that God himself created and ordained sex as the union that unites husband and wife in marriage and that it's not for self-gratification.

As I have said, we have lots in common with the Corinthian church in the way we wrongly think about sexual purity.

But we could quite easily think that this might not apply to us here at Church at the peak because we might not be sleeping with prostitutes on a regular basis or shackled up with our stepmother like what was happening in the Corinthian church. But Jesus lowers the bar of sexual purity a little more for us when he says in Matthew chapter 5 verse 28.

*“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart”.*

Jesus’ words remind us that sexual immorality and adultery doesn’t just apply to people that sleep around or have affairs, but to anyone that has looked lustfully at a woman before.

And so, just like the Corinthian church our wrong thinking about sexual purity also needs to change to become a right way of thinking when it comes to sexual purity.

A right way of thinking motivated by the truth that Christians are joined to Jesus, that they were made for him and not for sexual immorality and we need to keep firmly in our minds that God sent his spirit to live in us which connects us directly to him.

And as we read in Genesis Chapter 2

When it comes to thinking the right way about sexual purity, we can also let our thinking be shaped by Gods good plan for sex, which is to unite the man to the woman in marriage found in Genesis.

**Point 3** - A right action when it comes to sexual purity

This right way of thinking about sexual purity, must now lead us to right behaviour or action when it comes to sexual purity.

Which leads us to Pauls last few points in his letter to the Corinthian church about what the right action is looks like.

He says in verse 18, “Flee from sexual immorality” and just a little further along in verse 20, Paul says “honor God with your body”.

At The Katoomba Christian men’s Convention a few years back there was a question time and one of the anonymous questions that was sent by text asked one of the panel members what he as a married man should do about a sexual relationship that had started with a lady at his work.

The speaker being questioned said one thing. FLEE.

Nothings else was said, just FLEE.

It was a powerful word that left me visualising what it meant to FLEE, I couldn’t help but think about the stories on the news of refugees leaving their homes, taking only what they can carry, walking for 100’s of miles, in dangerous conditions, doing everything they can possible to escape the horror of war left behind.

This is the idea Paul is conveying when he tells his readers to FLEE from sexual immorality and he means all sexual immorality, the prostitutes, the affairs, the lustful looks and the porn. And it’s not just for the young but also the old, not just for the married but also the single person, not just for the man but also for the woman. Its for the whole church.

Paul though gives us a place, a refuge and a safe harbour to Flee to, he says in verse 20

*“That we were Bought at a price”.*

Paul is saying that Jesus who died on the cross paid the highest price imaginable for your life. The price Jesus paid was his own life and he gave it up on the cross so that we could be made clean from sin, set apart for God and finally declared righteous.

Jesus died the death that we deserved and paid the penalty that we couldn’t pay for ourselves. His act of payment for us means that if we believe in him, repent and make him Lord and our master then we get to live eternally with him in heaven.

As verse 11 from chapter 6 suggests.

We have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus

We have been sanctified, set apart for God

And that we have been Justified, declared righteous

All by the power and actions of the God who loves us so much that he would send his own son to die in our place.

This is good news, good news that gives us the confidence to know that because we belong to God because we are his very precious property, not our own but his.

That we can confidently flee our sin and come to him knowing that his love for us extends much further than we could imagine, his love for us means that we can flee to him when we fail to think the right way about sexual purity and when our actions don't reflect Gods ways.

We can have confidence that we can repent, and ask for forgiveness and his help to continue to flee from our sin and temptation.

Lastly Paul ends the passage with last call for action he says in verse 20 *"honour God with your bodies."*

I realise that our passage today will have challenged many of us here today, especially if you are struggling with addiction to pornography, some of you may be resisting temptation in the area of sexual purity and may be finding it hard.

And we know that Sexual addiction affects people deeply and so the next steps will most likely be baby steps at best, but Pauls call to action, that we should honour God with our bodies, means that we should be taking those initial steps so that one day you can say, Look what my God did for me, look how he saved me, and the people you tell will give glory to God for what he has done.

Also as we have seen with the recent Royal Commission on child sex related issues, God has not been that glorified through this process, but instead people have left churches thinking how can a God who loves people allow this kind of thing to happen.

God wants us to glorify him in the way we use our bodies and in the way we think about sexual purity.

That glory goes to God when we act in sexually pure ways towards our wives.

It goes to God when we act in sexually pure ways towards our close friends.

And it Goes to God as we act in sexually pure ways as we live our lives, especially when your alone with God.

Let's finish by praying.