

## 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 20

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| <p><sup>9</sup> Or do you not know<br/>that the unrighteous<br/>will not inherit the kingdom of God?<br/>Do not be deceived;<br/>neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,<br/>nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,<br/><sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the covetous,<br/>nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers,<br/>will inherit the kingdom of God.<br/><sup>11</sup> Such were some of you;<br/>but you were washed,<br/>but you were sanctified,<br/>but you were justified<br/>in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ<br/>and in the Spirit of our God.<br/><sup>12</sup> ‘All things are lawful for me,’<br/>but not all things are profitable.<br/>‘All things are lawful for me,’<br/>but I will not be mastered by anything.<br/><sup>13</sup> ‘Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food,<br/>but God will do away with both of them.’<br/>Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord,<br/>and the Lord is for the body.</p>  | <p>true knowledge<br/>about the kingdom of God</p> <p>do not be deceived<br/>by pagan behavior</p> <p>who you were vs. who you are</p> <p>do not be deceived<br/>by Greek ‘wisdom’</p> <p>true knowledge<br/>about the body</p>  |
| <p><sup>14</sup> Now God has not only raised the Lord,<br/>but will also raise us up through His power.<br/><sup>15</sup> Do you not know<br/>that your bodies<br/>are members of Christ?<br/>Shall I then take away the members of Christ<br/>and make them members of a prostitute?<br/>May it never be!<br/><sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that<br/>the one who joins himself<br/>to a prostitute<br/>is one body with her?<br/>For He says, ‘The two<br/>shall become one flesh.’<br/><sup>17</sup> But the one who joins himself<br/>to the Lord<br/>is one spirit with Him.<br/><sup>18</sup> Flee immorality.<br/>Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body,<br/>but the immoral man sins against his own body.<br/><sup>19</sup> Or do you not know<br/>that your body<br/>is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you,<br/>whom you have from God,<br/>and that you are not your own?<br/><sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price:<br/>therefore glorify God in your body.</p> | <p>bodily resurrection – Jesus and us</p> <p>your bodies: members of Christ</p> <p>no prostitution</p> <p>joins<br/>to a prostitute<br/>one body with her<br/>two become one<br/>(Genesis 2:24)</p> <p>joins<br/>to the Lord<br/>one spirit with him</p> <p>flee immorality</p> <p>your body: temple of the Spirit</p> <p>glorify God in your body</p> |

## Historical and Cultural Background

### *Sexual Activity in Greco-Roman Culture*

- Romans and Greeks understood sex in terms of penetrator vs. penetrated, active vs. passive. Generally, they believed that masculinity was sexually expressed by being the active, penetrator role, whether the partner was female or male. To be the passive, penetrated partner (male or female) made one of lower status. In Rome, the role was generally reserved for boys, slaves, prostitutes, and entertainers. To be a penetrated adult male carried shame with it, as Roman military conquest was often described in terms of sexual conquest. 'Effeminate' (*malakos*) and 'homosexuals' (*arsenokoites*<sup>1</sup>), refer to the passive and active partners in a male homosexual act. Married Roman and Greek men regularly had extramarital sex, since they saw marriage mainly for producing children.
- However, Greeks sometimes did idealize same-sex relations between men of equal status (notably in the army, whereas the Romans did not allow that); some Romans referred to it as 'the Greek vice.' The Greek teacher Sappho also attests to female same-sex relationships. In the early Roman Imperial period, both Martial and Juvenal refer to male couples performing traditional marriage rites (although Roman law did not recognize marriage between men). They attest that it was not uncommon, although both authors mock the practice. The Emperor Nero even celebrated two marriages (and perhaps a third) with men, once taking the role of bride (with a freedman named Pythagoras) and once taking the role of groom (with Sporus).<sup>2</sup>
- The phrases, 'All things are lawful for me' and 'Food is for the stomach...' (v.12 – 13) are popular Greek 'wisdom sayings' of the day. They are rooted in an Epicurean attitude towards the body, which would eventually be destroyed by death, in their view. The Greek logic runs: If the body has an appetite, whether physical or sexual, then you should meet it; it is only natural. Paul was refuting these sayings, first by quoting them sarcastically and then by rebutting them by coordinating the body with the resurrected Lord Jesus. On the question of where to put the quotation marks: the Greek language in that time had no quotation marks, so we have to determine from the content where to place them.
- Prostitution (mentioned in v.15 – 17) was very common, in brothels and also as part of the after-dinner entertainment at pagan temples.<sup>3</sup> Roman men were expected to make use of prostitutes from adolescence, for sexual release.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul appears to have taken the verb form *arsenos koiten* into its noun form *arsenokoitai*. The Greek Septuagint translation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 is translated as follows: 'Whoever lies with a man as with a woman [*meta arsenos koiten gynaikos*], they have both done an abomination.' Duke Professor of New Testament Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, p.382 following Robin Scroggs, says, 'This is almost certainly the idiom from which the noun *arsenokoitai* was coined.'

<sup>2</sup> Martial 1.24 and 12.42; Juvenal 2.117–42. Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p.28, 280; Karen K. Hersh, *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.36; Caroline Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.151ff.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.188

Questions

1. Let's get out there our first emotional reactions to this section
2. State: I realize that this is a very unpopular issue to hear about. These are not the kind of bible verses that you'd put up on your door or office wall. But there is a very important vision that he has which he wants us to understand. (If necessary, discuss some of the examples in the Appendix below. LEADER please read the Appendix below regardless.)
3. How does Paul not reason about sex?
  - a. Sex will be better if you wait for it... (self-interest)
  - b. You will demean yourself if... (self-interest)
  - c. Your emotions will be healthier if... (self-interest)
  - d. You will hurt someone else or use them if...
4. Let v.9 sink in. It's kind of scary. What does it mean that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom?
  - a. Who are the righteous? Well, Paul seems to believe that the Corinthians are according to v.11.
  - b. Why are they righteous? Because they have believed in Christ! Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor.1:30). 'But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...' And when we share in him by faith, we share his righteousness.
  - c. Christ is God's kingdom expressed in human flesh. That is what makes Jesus absolutely unique. No one else conquered the corruption of sin and resisted every temptation. No one else perfected human nature.
  - d. So a determination to not be in Christ, and not obey him and grow in him, is a rejection of God's reign, and God's kingdom in Christ. Apparently it doesn't mean that we have to be perfect, as Paul still addresses the Corinthian Christians as Christians who made mistakes. But there has to be desire for Jesus and growth in Jesus, as v.11 shows.
5. Is it significant that Paul lists ten vices in 6:9 – 10? Paul's lists of vices in 1 Corinthians:

|     | Exodus 20:1 – 17 | 1 Corinthians 5:9 | 1 Corinthians 5:11 | 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 10     |
|-----|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1.  | No other gods    | Sexually immoral  | Sexually immoral   | Fornicators                |
| 2.  | No idolatry      | Idolaters         | Idolaters          | Idolaters                  |
| 3.  | No blasphemy     |                   |                    | Adulterers                 |
| 4.  | Sabbath          |                   |                    | Male-male, passive partner |
| 5.  | Honor parents    |                   |                    | Male-male, active partner  |
| 6.  | No murder        |                   |                    | Thieves                    |
| 7.  | No adultery      | Greedy            | Greedy             | Greedy                     |
| 8.  | No theft         |                   | Drunkards          | Drunkards                  |
| 9.  | No false witness |                   | Slanderers         | Slanderers                 |
| 10. | No covetousness  | Swindlers         | Swindlers          | Swindlers                  |

- a. Paul seemed to be building up to this point.
- b. Are all these sins having to do with the body? Test out the theory. They are either against your own body, or someone else's body.
- c. 'That Paul and Moses both gave God's people ten words to ensure they would receive their inheritance and become part of a kingdom is intriguing. Paul acts like Moses in a number of places in his letters. Furthermore, Paul has a high view of Exodus traditions, not least in 1 Corinthians. That Paul could have reflected on the Moses material typologically, seeing a similarity in his situation and theirs, and been led to speak of inheriting the kingdom is quite possible.'<sup>4</sup>
- d. Notice that Paul also refers to God dwelling within His people in a Temple-like way, in 6:19 – 20. The running story in Paul's mind is that God has delivered His people out of sin in a deeper way than He delivered His people out of Egypt long ago. And God dwells among and within His people in a deeper way than He dwelled among His people when He brought them out of Egypt. So God is purposing to give His people an inheritance in a new garden planet in a deeper way than He gave His people an inheritance in a garden land long ago.

<sup>4</sup> Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Donald A. Carson, editor, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 2010), p.241

6. Does anything surprise you about v.11? That the Corinthians used to be marked and defined by these behaviors! There is hope for change in Jesus!
  - a. Washed...sanctified...justified: I don't think there is a particular order here. What matters more is the trinitarian structure of salvation from sin: in the name of *Jesus*, in the *Spirit* of our *God* [the Father].
  - b. Illus: A mentor of mine was leading a small group bible study when we started talking about things that we have stopped when we came to Jesus. He said, 'I stopped having sex.' My jaw must have hung open in disbelief. It was so countercultural! But that is what following Jesus means.
  - c. Illus: Leader tell a story of what you have been delivered from, by Jesus.
7. Is Paul agreeing or disagreeing with 'All things are lawful...' in v.12 and 'Food is for the stomach...' in v.13?
  - a. No, he is sarcastically quoting them back to themselves.
  - b. Are we sure that the quotations go where this manuscript puts them? We can tell because he immediately contradicts that thought afterwards.
  - c. The saying 'food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will destroy them both' is rooted in the Greek Epicurean view that the body doesn't matter because only the soul matters, and the body will be destroyed anyway. So just indulge. It looks at biology as a license to indulge. The idea is that if we have organs, they were meant to be used. You complete the thought.
  - d. Dr. Gordon Fee notes that it is possible that in 6:18, the phrase, 'every other sin that a man commits is outside the body' is a Corinthian slogan that Paul is quoting back to them, and refuting with the next clause, 'BUT the immoral man sins against his own body.'<sup>5</sup>
  - e. Application: Today, we have a 'wisdom saying': YOLO. What is the worldview behind YOLO as it applies to having sex?
  - f. Application: Have you heard of YOLO BICYCLE? But In Christ You Can Live Eternally. That changes your view of your destiny. What other slogans can you come up with to counteract YOLO?
8. What does it sound like Paul is concerned about when he says, 'I will not be mastered by anything' in v.12?
  - a. 'I will not be mastered by anything' in v.12 is about addiction.
  - b. Addiction in my body leads me down the road to hell. Paul understood that our choices shape our desires, both negatively (Eph.4:17 – 20; Rom.1:21 – 32) and positively (Eph.4:21 – 24; Rom.12:1 – 2; Philem.5 – 6). Furthermore, he said in v.9 – 10 that the people who identify themselves so much with their sin will not inherit the kingdom of God. I take that to mean that on the day when we meet Jesus face to face, he will ask us if we renounce all the sins we have committed. If I am addicted to something, like porn or hooking up or same sex union, then I will say, 'No!' Yet Jesus will insist that that is sin, and continue to call out for my surrender and repentance. See my presentation on 'Hell as the Love of God' for more information.

<sup>14</sup> Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. bodily resurrection – Jesus and us

<sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? your bodies: members of Christ

Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? no prostitution  
May it never be!

<sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? joins to a prostitute one body with her

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, also edited by Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1987)

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| For He says, 'The two shall become one flesh.'   | two become one (Genesis 2:24)         |
| <sup>17</sup> But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.  | joins to the Lord one spirit with him |
| <sup>18</sup> Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.                | flee immorality                       |
| <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? | your body: temple of the Spirit       |
| <sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.   | glorify God in your body              |

9. Now let's move to the second chiasm, v.14 – 20. Why does Paul bring up the resurrection in v.14? Because we are headed for the same destiny Jesus shares in. There is a oneness that God is bringing us towards.
- a. Illus: Telling my very young children that they will one day be stronger than me, and able to beat me at wrestling. They looked at me with very puzzled faces. It's hard to imagine experiencing something you haven't experienced yet. You have to trust someone who has gone through it. Jesus has gone through resurrection. He is the only one. We have to trust him that he knows what he's talking about.
10. What does becoming one with a prostitute in v.15 – 16 mean? Why is it not compatible with becoming one with Jesus?
- a. God will resurrect your body. We know that because God raised Jesus from the dead into new resurrection life. So He will raise us from the dead into new resurrection life.
  - b. And because Jesus' body has scars on it that glorify his act of love and faithfulness, so our bodies will bear the marks of our love and faithfulness. What we do now in this life will impact our bodies in the future.
  - c. Paul writes that the relationship between our bodies now and our bodies in the future is like the relationship between a seed and a plant (15:35 – 38). The plant grows out of the seed. So, if this were an analogy on a test, it would look like this: body now : body later :: seed : plant. This is why I insist that we are human becomings, not just human beings. We are becoming more and more human as God intended 'human' to be.
  - d. A student once asked me: So what does the word 'body' mean here?
    - i. A) Church interpretation: The word "body" refers to the body of Christ. We sin against the church in a unique way when we commit sexual sin. (If so, how?)
      1. Objection: After a quick scan, it doesn't seem like Paul uses the word "body" to refer to the church thus far in 1 Corinthians. (He does later however, as in chapter 10.) Also, it would be a sudden change of meaning for the word "body" within the context of 6:12-20. However Paul does sometimes use word play in other NT passages I think ("Israel").
    - ii. B) Physical, individual body interpretation: Sexual sin tarnishes my body in a way that other sin (jealousy, pride, laziness, etc.) does not. If so, how?
      1. Objection: This seems a bit mystical and mysterious, almost pagan, which is why I want to believe the church interpretation. However, if I'm just reading the text plainly, I feel like Paul is saying that my individual body is somehow uniquely sinned against when I commit sexual sin. This is how the ESV study Bible interprets it.
    - iii. My response:

\* All sin, even when it harms others, is self-harm. The two episodes of Genesis 3 and 4 strongly suggest that. Adam and Eve damaged their own human nature (and thus, ours).

But Cain appears to have damaged his own human nature further by murdering Abel. Hence, the ground was cursed for him, but not for others. JK Rowling portrayed murder as ripping your own soul. Something similar is happening with Cain, I think. Sexual sin with another person seems to produce some kind of entanglement with that person.

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul is constantly working back and forth between the body corporate (the community of the church) and the body individual (the physical, personal body). This interweaving becomes especially dense throughout chapters 5 - 7, which is about sex, the body, and the body. And in 6:9 - 20, Paul makes this interweaving very, very dense. I'm not sure we can distinguish between the two senses of "body" in 6:18, for instance. When Paul says "the immoral man sins against his own body", I think it's reasonable to assume the primary meaning of that is the body individual (cf. 6:15 and 6:18 have the body individual in view, and those are on opposite sides of a chiasm, I think: [http://nagasawafamily.org/paul\\_1corinthians.06.09-20.sg.pdf](http://nagasawafamily.org/paul_1corinthians.06.09-20.sg.pdf)). But the second meaning is not too far away. There is a kind of double entendre around the word "body".

As far as I've read, there are surprising things that can happen during sex, like a man's DNA staying in the body of the woman, even traveling to her brain. Of course there is also residual DNA from her children floating around in her body too, if a woman has children, so that's interesting. I don't know if there is any impact, health or otherwise. Perhaps we simply don't know enough.

What is curious is to combine this view of the body with the realization that every molecule in our bodies gets replaced at a certain rate, so that we are basically a waterfall: continuity of form, different underlying substance. There may be things at a molecular level that we are just beginning to glimpse, and that might affect our view of what impact sex has on us.

What is the body? is a good question. I am fairly confident that the biblical writers recognized our bodily dependence on creation (the stress on eating fruit and food) and our bodily interrelatedness with each other (marriage, genealogy, and blood). And, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are portrayed as food, water, and air - things we take into ourselves for our survival and growth.

But, the ancient practice of Levirate marriage (a brother impregnates his deceased brother's widow for the purpose of giving her children and raising up children for his brother) doesn't seem to be criticized as far as the text of Scripture is concerned, so the impression I have is that there are some context-dependent situations. In that sense, the overwhelming priority given to having children in some legitimate manner seems to take precedence.

So I suspect that 'two becoming one flesh' takes its primary meaning from an overarching theological category. There is some aspect of our nature as human beings, where our faithfulness to Jesus in this particular sense will be revealed in the next. Perhaps that will be apparent upon our bodies, or in and through our bodies, just as Jesus' marks of crucifixion still reside upon his body. Paul's focus in 1 Corinthians on the resurrection and eschaton suggest that to me.

11. But he also deepens the issue of union in v.16b – 17, such that we are one spirit with the Lord through his body and in your body.
  - a. Your body comes from God through your human parents. They are a reflection of the Trinity: two persons bound in love. In the Trinity, God is two persons bound in love which is so intense that the love itself is a third person.
  - b. If you go all the way back to creation, then you see it really well. I happen to believe that there was an original couple named Adam and Eve. But even if you take that as a metaphor, you'd still be on stable ground to say that God made all things, and made all life to produce more life, as Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 shows.

- c. The quotation of Genesis 2:24 is highly important. Genesis 2:24 is the center of his chiasm in 6:14 – 20. It is the controlling thought in the sense of two bodies becoming one. And those two bodies are the bodies of a husband and wife in lifelong marriage. God designed sexual union for marriage to express real physical union. Paul affirms the sense that sexual union is a physical and spiritual oneness to be shared by husband and wife.
  - d. Even if the prostitute and the client are consensually using each other, there is a real union established that is not just casual. Sex means more than we think it does.
  - e. Paul affirms that God has a vision that He has never retreated from. His original vision came from the creation order of Genesis 2. We are not at liberty to define our relationships however we want.
    - i. Illus: Here's a challenging story! 'Illustrating this point was the story of the Caliph Mansur [the second Abbasid caliph from 754 – 775 AD], who sent three beautiful Greek slave girls and 3,000 gold pieces to the physician Georges [ben Gabriel, a Christian who Mansur had abducted from his post as head of the hospital at Gundishapur, Persia, in the hopes that Georges would cure him]. Accepting the gift of money, the physician returned the girls with the message that 'with such I shall not live in the house, for to us, Christians, only one wife is allowed, and I have one in Belafel.'<sup>6</sup>
  - f. In v.15, the reader is told 'your bodies are members of Christ'. That is, we are 'in Christ.' Then in the parallel stanza of v.19, Paul says that the *Holy Spirit* is within you which you have from *God*. That is, you are in Christ and the Spirit from God is in you. Thus the believing community lives its life suspended within the Trinity. And within the Trinity, there is a life-giving and life-producing love. We are expected to order our sexuality accordingly.
12. How are we called to image God, or bear His image??
- a. Your body is a sacrament (which means a physical object or act that points to or contains a spiritual reality). We image God with all of our lives. And God does not flirt with people, or use them, or just have one night stands with them. He desires eternal, loving union with each person. Sex within marriage alone is an embodied picture of God's desire to be one, faithfully and eternally, with each person. We are embodied and can only do that with one other person. God by His Spirit can do that with each of us, because He has become embodied in Jesus as one of us.
  - b. Your body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The radical Christian idea is that Jesus desires to live in your physical body by his Spirit. It's like having a new house guest, except that he's the true owner and the maker! He says, 'Excuse me, would you mind helping me clean all this up? It's not as clean as it could be for me, and not appropriate to reflect me to others. Let's rearrange the furniture in here, shall we? As in, let's rearrange the priorities inside your heart.' And he may be gentle in how he goes about this. Or he may be tough. But let's be clear: He never apologizes to you for any inconvenience that may cause. It is God's absolute right to do that.
  - c. 'Glorify God in your body.' This phrase has Amos 2:7 behind it. In that text the prophet records, 'A man and his father go in to the same maiden, so that my holy name is profaned.' That is, sexual misconduct is a profanation of the holy name of God. The opposite is also true. To follow right sexuality is to glorify God in your body.
    - i. The body of Christ, individual, is the dwelling place of God
      - 1. 'You were bought with a price.' The slave could put his/her money in a bank account in the temple of his/her choice. When there was enough money accumulated, the slave was then 'bought by the god.' This was the only manumission process available to the first century slave.
      - 2. Paul uses this image to explain to the Corinthians what had happened to them. They were 'bought with a price' by Christ. The price was not their coins placed in a bank account. It was the life and death of Jesus. He bore the burden of corrupted human nature and killed it to bring forth a new humanity. They were to live out their sexual lives accordingly. Sexuality must be lived out in the shadow of the life and death of Jesus.
    - ii. The body of Christ, corporate, is also the dwelling place of God
      - 1. Paul brings two ideas together. They are:
        - a. 'our bodies (plural) are members of Christ'
        - b. 'your (plural) body (singular) is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit.'

<sup>6</sup> Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New Amsterdam Books: New York, 1989), p.83

2. Thus Paul affirms that what we do with 'our bodies' is profoundly related to what happens to 'our (plural) body (singular)', that is, the church. Paul has made this same connection before in 1 Cor.5:7 when he wrote 'Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump...for Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed.' The assumption of this part of the discussion is that the church is a community. The immoral person must be considered as one needing love and healing, but as one 'in the world' not as one 'in the body.' This is for the sake of the person and ALSO the sake of the body of Christ. Just as Christ cleansed his body (individual), so Christ cleanses his body (corporate).
13. Is true love obvious? Not really.
- a. We all value each of the four loves: eros, storge, phileo, agape. But we do not know how to order them and organize them. The stepson who married his stepmother in 5:1 – 13 was combining eros and storge in a certain way that God called incest. Nowadays, we combine eros and phileo in certain ways that are very confusing: sex buddies and friends with benefits seem so free and natural, but when your boyfriend or girlfriend wants to have a threesome with someone else, then who are you to say no? Are there limits and boundaries? We all desire love. Yet we do not actually know what love is. We have to be told.
  - b. This is important because with non-Christians, we have to affirm first and disagree second.
  - c. Also, this is important because morality is not obvious. This prevents us from having a judgmental attitude towards others because there is something they just do not know. Now they may have reasons for their resistance, too. And we have to address that in some tactful way. But at the very least, we cannot assume that people 'already know' what is right.

#### **Appendix A: Our Modern Cultural Views on Bodies**

Our culture often assumes that your body is yours and yours alone. It appears that you are the one who feeds your body, washes your body, and lives in your body. So shouldn't you be the one who decides to paint your body, tattoo your body, or pierce your body? Shouldn't you be the one who decides to get liposuction on your body, inject plastic into your body, put hair on and take hair off your body? Shouldn't you be the one who decides when to have sex, and who to have sex with? Isn't it because it's your body? Shouldn't you be the one who decides when to have a baby, and whether to have an abortion? Isn't it because it's your body? Isn't the mantra of pro-abortion supporters, 'My body, my choice?' As long as we are talking about mature adults who are in their right mind, isn't it obvious and self-evident that your body is yours alone?

I'd like to give you the following scenarios and ask what you think about them:

1. A married couple regularly gets into a fight. She tells him to exercise more. He tells her to take more calcium. They say, 'Why are you telling me what to do with my body?'
2. A wife who feels uncomfortable that her husband watches pornography and masturbates to it. He says, 'Look, it's my body.'
3. One day, a 55 year old immigrant woman who cleans other people's houses, is sexually harassed. One of her employers, an older man, fondles her breast. The woman comes home and tells her son, a 25 year old young man. Feeling angry and protective over his mom's body, he decides to confront this older man.
4. A 9<sup>th</sup> grade boy is told by some high school friends, both boys and girls, that they saw his mom in a porn movie. She apparently filmed it when she was in her 20's. Chiding him, they ask whether he wants to come over to watch it with them. Flushed with deep confusion, anger at his mom, and resentment at his friends who chide him for it, he goes home and challenges his mom about the discovery. Angered, she goes into her room, slams the door, and refuses to talk about it.
5. Two young women have unwanted pregnancies. One gives birth to her baby and throws the baby into the dorm room toilet. The other has a late term abortion at 7.5 months.
6. Two couples with newborns are handed a short booklet about how infants need loving, physical touch for their brains and body to develop well. (Touch helps develop the brain's emotional wiring, increases the baby's heart and lung strength, and helps the baby's digestion.) One couple reads it; they make concrete changes to how they care for their baby. The other couple throws it away and does nothing differently; they are definitely less affectionate towards their baby than the first couple.

7. You go from the U.S. to another country on a vacation. In a crowded restaurant, you ask a couple sitting next to you if they would put out their cigarettes because you're affected by the smoke. They look at you in disbelief. They say, 'Smoking is legal here. Why don't you Americans stop telling the rest of the world what to do?'
8. A 22 year old young man is about to graduate from college. He is killed by a random shooter. His hard working parents are 55 and 60 years old and were hoping to afford their retirement with help from their son.
9. The U.S. government imposes a military draft, telling young men and women what to do with their bodies.
10. A veteran of the Iraq War returns home with a leg missing. One war protester points at him and says, 'I don't want my tax dollars going to support him!'

When we think about it, though, our bodies are clearly NOT just our own. The scenarios we just talked about show how we today acknowledge that your body is not just *your* body. (1) The first scenario: *A married couple regularly gets into a fight. She tells him to exercise more. He tells her to take more calcium. They say, 'Why are you telling me what to do with my body?'* This has some reality. My wife and I are tied to each other's bodies. She tells me to exercise, and I tell her to make sure she's getting enough calcium. Why? What gives us the right to tell each other what to do with our personal bodies? The fact that we'll have to care for each other when we get older. It really matters to her that I stay healthy, especially since her dad had a heart attack just a couple of years before we were married. It really matters to me that she gets enough calcium because women are at risk for osteoporosis. Because we are going to care for each other, she has a say in what I do with my body, and I have a say in what she does with hers.

(2) Second, let me take that up a notch. *A wife who feels uncomfortable that her husband watches pornography and masturbates to it. He says, 'Look, it's my body.'* Imagine a woman who catches her husband watching pornography. She feels betrayed. But why? Isn't that just him using his own eyes? Do his eyes belong to her? If we're going on the superficial assumptions of our culture, then the answer is no. She doesn't own his eyes so her feelings are invalid and there is nothing she can say. And yet something about that doesn't quite feel right, does it? What if he masturbates to pictures of other women, is there something wrong with that? Isn't his penis his own? Does it somehow belong to her? Or take it a step further. What's wrong exactly with Tiger Woods cheating on Elin Nordgren? Or Jesse James cheating on Sandra Bullock? Tiger's body is his body, isn't it? Jesse's body is his body, isn't it? As long as they're not catching some disease? But something about that doesn't quite feel right, does it? There is a sense in which a husband's eyes, a husband's penis, and even his mind actually belong in a secondary sense to his wife. Marriage creates a bond where their bodies belong to each other in an appropriate way. Something in us tells us that. But how can we explain that?

(3) *One day, a 55 year old immigrant woman who cleans other people's houses, is sexually harassed. One of her employers, an older man, fondles her breast. The woman comes home and tells her son, a 25 year old young man. Feeling angry and protective over his mom's body, he decides to confront this older man.* This is based on reality. When my mom, who does domestic work cleaning rich people's condominiums, told me that one of the older men she worked for grabbed her breast, I was incensed. If I was living in Los Angeles near my mom, I would have gone to have a few choice words with that old pervert. Clearly, there is something about my mom's body that I take responsibility for, which I defend. It is *her* body, yes, no question, and yet *I* am tied to her body, too. I feel the same way about the bodies of my sister, my wife, my daughter, and my female friends. Why do men take responsibility for the bodies of the women in their lives? I'm willing to bet that every man has felt that way. But why? How do we explain that?

(4) Fourth, consider abortion, that hot button issue. *Two young women have unwanted pregnancies. One gives birth to her baby and throws the baby into the dorm room toilet. The other has a late term abortion at 7.5 months.* Some people, and perhaps you think this way, believe that abortion should be okay under any circumstances, during any part of the pregnancy. The rationale is, 'My body, my choice.' But do you think it's wrong for a woman to flush her newborn baby down the toilet? You probably do think it's wrong. Incidentally, according to one estimate, 30,000 babies are abandoned every year in the U.S. But if it's wrong to kill a newborn baby, then is it wrong to kill that baby 1 week before it's born? What difference does 1 week make exactly? What difference does it make whether that baby is inside or outside the mother's womb? I understand that these questions are hard to answer, but that's why I raise them. Perhaps there are legitimate circumstances to get an abortion, but I don't think it's as simple as saying, 'My body, my choice.'

(5) Consider the deep relational and emotional complications of having a mom who starred in a sex tape or in a pornographic film. Is it true that it was just the woman's choice, and it doesn't matter what the repercussions are for her son? Now that images and videos can live forever on the internet, does this affect her children? And maybe her grandchildren? Does she owe them something? An explanation? Regret? Not doing it in the first place?

(6) And then there the responsibilities parents owe their children with their bodies. *Two couples with newborns are handed a short booklet about how infants need loving, physical touch for their brains and body to develop well. (Touch helps develop the brain's emotional wiring, increases the baby's heart and lung strength, and helps the baby's digestion.) One couple reads it; they make concrete changes to how they care for their baby. The other couple throws it away and does nothing differently; they are definitely less affectionate towards their baby than the first couple.* There's something wrong with that second couple. Children need touch and love in order to develop. It's fairly well known now that breast feeding has more benefits to the baby than bottle, that affection helps brains and bodies develop. It's funny that in the Bay Area, in liberal Berkeley, one blogger said that people come out and tell other people what to do. You should get a better children's bike helmet. You shouldn't mess with the animals. You shouldn't litter. (*In Bay Area, Free Speech Means Scolding Strangers*, by Michelle Quinn, <http://bayarea.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/03/the-societal-police-take-on-insect-displays/>)

(7) You go from the U.S. to another country on a vacation. In a crowded restaurant, you ask a couple sitting next to you if they would put out their cigarettes because you're affected by the smoke. They look at you in disbelief. They say, 'Smoking is legal here. Why don't you Americans stop telling the rest of the world what to do?' Well, that's certainly a culture clash, isn't it?

(8) Consider the connections in families. *A 22 year old young man is about to graduate from college. He is killed by a random shooter. His hard working parents are 55 and 60 years old and were hoping to afford their retirement with help from their son.* That child was obviously the parents' beloved child. But let's also say that that child was their retirement plan. They scrimped and saved all their lives for that child to make it through school, have those opportunities, go to college, and get a respectable job. That child was about to enter the working world and help his parents. The person who fired that bullet has robbed them. The son's body was not just his own. And what about friendships? If that person was a friend of yours, you are also robbed. Perhaps not as deeply as his parents, but you are robbed nonetheless. We miss their smiles and hugs. Our friends hold our hand and hold us up. We are invested in their bodies.

(9) Consider the military draft. *The U.S. government imposes a military draft, telling young men and women what to do with their bodies.* The government can call up able-bodied men and women into the armed services through the draft. The government can tell you to kill and die – to do things with your body that you probably would not do otherwise. A few people would say no to the draft, but some would say yes for the right cause. But, in any case, when those same men and women come back with a limb missing, or their nerves shattered from post-traumatic stress, do we have an obligation to their bodies? Do we have a responsibility to care for them? I think we would all say yes to that. We are invested in their bodies, because they risked their bodies for us.

(10) *A veteran of the Iraq War returns home with a leg missing. One war protester points at him and says, 'I don't want my tax dollars going to support him!'* I think most of us would say that the veteran's body exerts a claim on our bodies. When veterans come back with shattered nerves or broken bodies, we feel a claim on our bodies. Because of their sacrifice, even if we disagreed with the Iraq War, we make a sacrifice: in paying taxes to support their recovery.

So how is it possible to keep saying that you are the only owner of your body when in reality, we don't live like that at all? When we think about loving others, when we think about our duty to them, when we think about our commitments to people, when we think about our most important relationships, we are not the only people who have a claim to our own bodies. Other people do, too. That is clear. So how are we to make sense of all this?

### **Relevance**

At the very least, it should lead us to question American culture and how we talk about our bodies. That sets the stage for the much deeper Christian claim. It's not that loving Jesus and following him takes us in the other direction to the point that your body really doesn't belong to you. There is an entirely different paradigm. Are you

ready for this? Because this is going to challenge our culture like almost nothing else, but it will also explain at a swift stroke all the ways that we sense that we are interconnected. Here it is: We are not actually the primary owner of our bodies. God is the primary owner of *all our bodies*. *You* are the secondary owner of your body. You have been *entrusted* with your body to share it with God. God has a vision for how we all use our bodies. That vision is for our bodies to house *Him*.