

## 1 Corinthians 6

The Corinthian church thought they were pretty smart. They were proud of their spiritual insight – their intelligence regarding the things of God. Paul knocks them down a few notches in this chapter, pointing out that they really don't know very much. They were actually quite ignorant with respect to spiritual matters. He asks them the question "Do you not know?" six times in the chapter's 20 verses. (See 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16 & 19.) Let's be sure to learn these lessons so that we can be a spiritually *intelligent* church.

- I. 6:1-8 A spiritually intelligent church will know how to resolve its conflicts.
- II. 6:9-20 A spiritually intelligent church will know that it is essential to remain pure.

### **An intelligent church will know how to resolve its conflicts and that it is essential to remain pure.**

- I. 6:1-8 A spiritually intelligent church will know how to resolve its conflicts.
  - A. Lawsuits were very common in the Greco-Roman world and the people enjoyed them. They would have loved our court TV shows. Moreover, many ancient cases were heard and decided before a public audience. (Remember the mob screaming for Jesus to be crucified?) Paul was publicly brought before Gallio right here in Corinth (See Acts 18).
  - B. Some Corinthian believers were bringing their private quarrels before the public courts.
    - i. Real crimes, of course, need to be brought before the authorities. That's why those authorities are there.
    - ii. The context indicates, however, that these were personal disagreements, minor issues – interpersonal conflicts involving business dealings and so on. These things are bound to happen whenever people interact.
  - C. The Jews in the Roman world liked to resolve their own disputes. Sages were frequently sent out by twos to the Jewish communities scattered through the Empire to serve as judges settling cases in the places they visited. (Victor Bible Background Commentary)
  - D. Christians ought to be able to do something similar. When people can't come to an agreement, the leaders of the church or even a Christian lawyer, if specialized knowledge is needed, ought to be able to help them determine a fair settlement.
  - E. Paul makes two points regarding our future destiny that bear mentioning:
    - i. We will one day judge the world (v.2). See Daniel 7 where it says the saints will one day "possess the kingdom". In Revelation we are told this will happen after Christ's return. (See Rev. 20)
    - ii. We will one day judge angels (v.3). The Bible is not very clear about this, but of course we can assume Paul is right. I suppose if we are going to reign *with Christ, as His bride*, then that will put us in a position superior to that of angels. Judging those angels who have rebelled may be part of that shared authority.

## A spiritually intelligent church will know how to resolve its conflicts.

- Three reasons for resolving differences more privately – within the church:
  - The basis for going to court already reveals a serious problem:
    - On the one side, we should never treat people so unfairly as to cause them to feel they have a case to bring against us. We should run our businesses, for example, the utmost integrity. This was not happening in Corinth (v.8).
      - Be wise: Don't trust people just because they claim to be Christian. That little fish logo, for example, is now almost meaningless. In some cases it means there's something "fishy" about the guy who uses it.
    - On the other side, lawsuits are often spiteful – focused on revenge or seen as an opportunity to make money. They don't resolve the conflict, they make it worse. This kind of vengeful attitude should never be tolerated in a Christian's heart. It would be better to lose than to win in such a case (v.7).
  - Lawsuits can bring shame upon the church and the name of Jesus Christ. The world is then more likely to see us (and God) in light of our problems instead of our purpose.
  - A secular judge and jury are not likely to be sensitive to Christian values, which, let's face it, can (or at least ought to) differ from those of the general public. (See also *Life Application New Testament Commentary*.)
- Conflicts will arise among Christians as within any group of people, but Christians ought to be the best equipped people on earth to resolve them fairly and peacefully – and without resorting to secular courts. Our courts are way too crowded anyway in this sue-happy society.

## A spiritually intelligent church will know how to resolve its conflicts.

- II. 6:9-20 A spiritually intelligent church will know that it is essential to remain pure.
  - A. Ungodly behavior is (or better, "was") an indicator of an unsaved soul. 6:9-11
    - i. Definitions:
      - a. **Homosexuals** (v.9) This Greek word refers to male prostitutes or boys who willingly become the sexual partners of men – a popular arrangement in the ancient world – and even practiced by some Roman emperors. Nero actually married a young man who had been castrated named Sporus.
      - b. **Sodomites** (v.9) This Greek word is a more general term for men who take part in homosexual acts.
      - c. **Covetous** (v.10) those who always want to have more.
      - d. **Drunkards** (v.10) those who get intoxicated
      - e. **Revilers** (v.10) those who attack others with abusive language

- ii. 6:11 Notice the past tense “**were**”. We don’t have to keep our old identity. In fact, we ought to lose it. We are now new creations: washed, set apart and made right with God at the deepest level. Don’t let your sin identify you.
  - a. The Bible here differs from a lot of popular thinking, such as, “I am an alcoholic” or “I’m gay” – as if these are permanent characteristics.
  - b. A more biblical phrasing might be, “I’m a Christian – a new person in Christ, though I struggle with, or am tempted by, some particular sin.”

**A spiritually intelligent church will know that it is essential to remain pure.**

B. God has placed strict limits, for our own good, on sexual expression. 6:12-14

- i. 6:12 **All things are lawful for me** This was probably a popular saying in Corinth – emphasizing that Christians were no longer under the law. Paul may have even used it in that way at one point.
  - a. It’s true that we are not under the law. Still, it’s not true that we can always just do anything we please. This was a case of swinging the pendulum too far in the other direction – from legalism to license.

*“[The devil] always sends errors into the world in pairs—pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not let us be fooled. We have to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight between both errors. We have no other concern than that with either of them.” (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p.186)*

- ii. 6:13-14 **Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods** This also seems to have been a popular saying.
  - a. The point is this: I have a stomach. I want to eat. Food is the natural way to satisfy my natural desire. “You gotta eat.”
  - b. They then went one step farther: I have a body equipped for sex and I have sexual desires. Therefore, it’s only right that I fulfill my desires.
  - c. Many Christians are now beginning to think this way. “These desires come naturally to me; therefore I ought to be free to act upon them.”
  - d. Paul disagrees, saying that God has placed proper limits upon our sexual expression. The body was not intended for *porneia* – immoral sexual behavior – but for the Lord. He will raise it up in that day (v.14).

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C. Our bodies belong to Jesus; we are not free to do as we please with them. 6:15-20

- i. Prostitution was big business in Corinth and was part of the city’s primary religion – the worship of Aphrodite. (Think “aphrodisiac”.) Apparently there were those in the Corinthian church who hadn’t given up their old ways.

- ii. As Christians we are part of the body of Christ (v.15). We are **joined to the Lord** at the spiritual level (v.17). The Holy Spirit actually indwells us (v.19). Our bodies no longer belong to us, but we belong totally to God – bodies included.
- iii. Sexual acts are not merely physical. There is an emotional, psychological, even spiritual tie that is created as a result. Sexual sin may bring temporary pleasure, but also brings lasting emotional or psychological harm. It is therefore a very damaging type of sin.

*“Sex outside of marriage is like a man robbing a bank: he gets something, but it is not his and he will one day pay for it. Sex within marriage can be like a person putting money into a bank: there is safety, security, and he will collect dividends.” (Wiersbe)*

- iv. The most important bit of advice Paul gives us in this chapter is to “Flee sexual immorality” (v.18). That’s exactly what Joseph did and he avoided the sin.
  - a. He was he servant of Potiphar in Egypt. Potiphar’s wife kept trying to seduce Joseph. Then one day she found him alone in the house and ...

**Gen 39:12 NKJV ... she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand, and fled **and ran outside.****

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### **Conclusions:**

- Conflict resolution – the ability to settle our differences – is a valid mark of spirituality within a church. The Corinthian church just didn’t get this. They were taking their private quarrels out into the secular courts.
  - If we feel we’ve been genuinely wronged, it’s important to know how to bring things up to one another in a loving way in order to settle our differences. If we have to bring one or two other believers into the discussion as mediators – so be it. The point is to peaceably come to an agreement.
  - Most disagreements can be prevented by simply determining in our hearts not to wrong others – or at least to readily admit when we have done so and take full responsibility.
- Purity, especially sexual purity.
  - The key point here is to understand that our new life in Christ needs to disconnect from the sins of the old life.
  - We’ve been born again. We are new creatures. We’re new people.
  - God has given us the ability to avoid sin. If we truly believe that, then we’re going to be ready to do whatever it takes to avoid our old sinful practices.

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