



Session 5: Body & Soul



Often our spirituality focuses on the heart and head.

But our bodies are also profoundly spiritual and how we treat them is an essential part of spiritual growth and Christ-likeness.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

1 Corinthians 6.12–20

Someone will say, "I am allowed to do anything." Yes; but not everything is good for you. I could say that I am allowed to do anything, but I am not going to let anything make me its slave. Someone else will say, "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food." Yes; but God will put an end to both. The body is not to be used for sexual immorality, but to serve the Lord; and the Lord provides for the body. God raised the Lord from death, and he will also raise us by his power.

You know that your bodies are parts of the body of Christ. Shall I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of the body of a prostitute? Impossible! Or perhaps you don't know that the man who joins his body to a prostitute becomes physically one with her? The scripture says quite plainly, "The two will become one body." But he who joins himself to the Lord becomes spiritually one with him.

Avoid immorality. Any other sin a man commits does not affect his body; but the man who is guilty of sexual immorality sins against his own body. Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and who was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourselves but to God; he bought you for a price. So use your bodies for God's glory.

Setting the scene:

- The old Greek city of Corinth was dominated by the goddess Aphrodite. Like many Greek cities, Corinth had many Temple prostitutes. In Corinth, the people were claiming that they should be free to satisfy their sexual needs – just like hunger needs to be satisfied by food.
- A popular Greek idea suggested that the body was not important, but Paul counteracts that claim by teaching that the body and spirit are both important to God. You cannot sin with the body and keep your 'spirit' untarnished.
- The Temple is the place where God dwells. But now the Holy Spirit dwells in the people of God.
- Our prime motivation for sexual purity is to honour God.

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. Do you think the situation in Corinth is much different from Western culture today?

Q2. Do you agree that the way we treat or use our body is key to spiritual growth and our life with God?

‘The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow our minds to dwell upon. It is in our thoughts that the first movements toward the renovation of the heart occur.’

*Dallas Willard,
Renovation of the Heart*

Respond

Body & Soul challenge: As a group, create a challenge that will help you honour God with your body this week or choose from the following ideas:

Challenge ideas:

1. Media Fast

Our media-driven culture is obsessed with sexuality and lust but this is nothing new: it is one of the issues that Jesus addresses in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5.27-30). Often misinterpreted, it is not that sexual attraction is wrong (we are human after all) but that the sin is intentionally looking at another person and dreaming, leering, imagining, cultivating and gratifying sexual desire. Take some time this week to fast from magazines, internet, TV, video games and other media that can stimulate sexual desire. Find alternatives to fill your mind – walk, exercise, chat with friends, pray – just give your mind and imagination some time out. It may be hard, but not impossible!

2. Work Out

It may be obvious, but many of us simply don't get the exercise that our bodies require. Honour God with your body this week as you increase your exercise – do a gym class, surf, weed the garden, cycle, race your kids, go for a run, swim, meet for a game of badminton. Just enjoy the opportunity to release some energy and remember to thank God for the ability to exercise.

3. Looking after ourselves

In what ways might this session prompt you to consider some small steps to be kind to your body? You might want to look up some new healthy recipes, sleep more, cut down on alcohol or cigarettes, enjoy a Sabbath rest, introduce some exercise or dance into your weekly schedule – whatever you think might help you to take steps to honour God with your body.

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you each look to focus on honouring God by looking after your body and soul this week.