

Going Deeper...

A study Guide & Resources for Spiritual Growth Based on 1 Corinthians 6

Sermon Summary: “Be Who You Already Are”

Core Message

Paul addresses the Corinthian church's tendency to revert to their pre-Christian behaviors, particularly in two areas: taking fellow believers to secular courts over minor disputes, and engaging in sexual immorality. His central exhortation: "Become who you already are in Christ."

Key Themes & Insights

1. The Problem of Lawsuits Among Believers (vv. 1-8)

Historical Context:

- *Corinthian civil courts were notoriously corrupt—ancient sources describe judges as "gowned vultures who sell their judgments"*
- Lawsuits in the ancient world were primarily about winning honor and destroying an opponent's reputation, not pursuing justice
- Common disputes included: shipping agreements, boundary issues, inheritance disagreements, unpaid debts, and defamation

Paul's Argument:

- It's hypocritical to ask unbelievers destined for judgment to settle disputes between those who will one day judge the world (vv. 2-3)
- These lawsuits represent spiritual defeat regardless of who wins legally (v. 7)
- A mature Christian would rather suffer wrong than damage the church's witness (v. 7)

Modern Application:

Today's "court of public opinion" is social media. Believers who publicly berate other believers online mirror the Corinthian problem—contending for honor while assaulting character, all before a watching world.

2. The Vice List & Identity Transformation (vv. 9-11)

The Unrighteous Will Not Inherit God's Kingdom:

Paul lists behaviors that characterize those in rebellion against God: sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, homosexual practice, theft, greed, drunkenness, reviling, swindling.

Critical Distinction:

Paul isn't saying one sin disqualifies you from salvation. He's warning against *callousness toward sin*—not thinking it's wrong, not mourning when you fail, not seeking to change. "Persistent rebellion increasingly calls into question any prior profession of faith."

The Gospel Transformation (v. 11):

"And such **were** some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

This is both humbling (that was you) and uplifting (that's not you anymore). God doesn't whitewash sins; He transforms sinners.

3. Sexual Immorality & Your Body (vv. 12-20)

Cultural Context:

Ancient Corinth accepted multiple sexual partners as normal: "Mistresses we have for pleasure, concubines for daily service to our bodies, and wives for the procreation of legitimate children." Sound familiar? Today's culture promotes hook-up culture, pornography, affairs, and various forms of sexual expression outside God's design.

False Theologies Paul Confronts:

1. **Misunderstanding Freedom:** "All things are lawful" doesn't mean "I can do whatever benefits me." Christian freedom means being free *not to sin*, not free *to sin*.
2. **Misunderstanding the Body:** The Corinthians believed "food for the stomach, body for sex—both temporary, both neutral." This false dualism separates faith from physical life.

Six Truths About Your Body:

1. Your body is **meant for the Lord** (v. 13)
2. Your body **will be resurrected** (v. 14)
3. Your body is a **member of Christ** (v. 15)
4. Your body is a **temple of the Holy Spirit** (v. 19)
5. Your body is **not your own** (v. 19)
6. Your body was **bought with a price** (v. 20)

The Grotesque Reality:

Sexual immorality creates "a grotesque connection of the One who represents ultimate commitment with an act that represents the most casual of relationships."

The Prescription:

Not "resist" or "avoid" but **FLEE** sexual immorality (v. 18). Then actively **glorify God in your body** (v. 20).

Interesting Facts

- **The "Hinge Unit":** Chapter 6 bridges Paul's corrections (chapters 1-6) with his answers to their specific questions (chapters 7+)
- **The Rolled-Up Poster Metaphor:** Like a 90s poster that keeps wanting to curl back to its original form, believers face constant pull toward old patterns
- **"Saints Will Judge the World":** This eschatological reality (v. 2) should radically reshape how we view "trivial" earthly disputes
- **One Flesh Union:** Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 to show that sexual union creates profound spiritual connection—even with a prostitute (v. 16)
- **Temple Imagery:** In a city famous for the temple of Aphrodite, Paul declares *your body* is God's temple—a revolutionary claim

Resources for Deeper Study

Commentaries:

- *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* by Gordon Fee (NICNT)
- *1 Corinthians* by David Garland (BECNT)
- *The Message of 1 Corinthians* by David Prior (BST)

Books on Sexual Ethics:

- *The Meaning of Marriage* by Timothy Keller
- *Rid of My Disgrace* by Justin & Lindsey Holcomb (for those affected by sexual trauma)
- *Finally Free* by Heath Lambert (addressing pornography)

Online Resources:

- Bible Project's 1 Corinthians series (visual overview)

Theological Reflection: How This Passage Reveals Jesus

Jesus as the Righteous Judge

While we're tempted to judge one another over trivial matters, Jesus is the ultimate Judge who will one day judge the world with perfect justice. Yet He chose to absorb judgment for us rather than condemn us. This should radically reshape how we approach conflicts with others.

Jesus as the Transformer

The movement from "such were some of you" to "but you were washed" is only possible because of Jesus' death and resurrection. He doesn't just forgive our past; He gives us a new identity and empowers us to live it out through His Spirit.

Jesus as the Bridegroom

Paul's teaching on sexual purity points to the ultimate reality—we are the bride of Christ. Sexual immorality is spiritual adultery because we belong to Jesus in the most intimate covenant relationship possible. Our bodies are reserved for union with Him.

Jesus as the Purchase Price

"You were bought with a price" (v. 20) points directly to the cross. Jesus didn't pay with silver or gold but with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). Understanding the cost of our redemption should motivate holiness more than any rule ever could.

Jesus as the Temple

In John 2:19-21, Jesus referred to His body as the temple. Now Paul says *our* bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are united with Christ so completely that what was true of Him becomes true of us. His holiness becomes our calling; His resurrection power becomes our strength.

Jesus as the One Who Suffered Wrong

The ultimate answer to "Why not rather suffer wrong?" is found at the cross. Jesus, though perfectly innocent, absorbed the ultimate injustice—bearing the sins of the world—rather than asserting His rights. He is both our example and our empowerment to do the same.

Jesus as Our New Identity

Everything Paul says about "who you are" flows from union with Christ. You're not trying to become something new—you already are new in Christ. The Christian life is learning to live out the reality of who Jesus has already made you to be.

Sermon as the Spark: Practical Application Questions

Take time this week to prayerfully work through these questions in a journal:

On Conflict & Community:

1. How does Jesus' willingness to suffer wrong on the cross reshape your view of "winning" disputes?

When you see Christ absorbing injustice rather than asserting His rights, how does that challenge your need to be vindicated?

2. Are you easily offended over trivial matters?

How does Jesus' patience with His disciples' constant misunderstandings and failures reveal what spiritual maturity looks like?

On Identity & Transformation:

3. Do you truly believe you are "washed, sanctified, justified"?

Or do you still define yourself by past failures? How does Jesus' declaration "It is finished" speak to your complete transformation?

4. Where are you slipping back into pre-Christ patterns?

What would it look like to see Jesus not just as Savior from sin's penalty, but as Lord who empowers you to live differently?

On Sexual Purity & Your Body:

5. How does viewing your body as "a temple of the Holy Spirit" change your approach to sexual temptation?

When you're tempted, do you remember that Jesus Himself dwells in you through His Spirit?

6. In what areas are you asking "How close can I get to the line?"

How does Jesus' call to radical holiness ("Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" - Matthew 5:48) challenge that question?

On Witness & Mission:

7. Would a non-believer want to become a Christian based on how you treat other believers?

How does Jesus' prayer "that they may be one... so that the world may believe" (John 17:21) convict or encourage you?

8. How does Jesus' mission to reconcile all things (Colossians 1:20) inform how you approach conflict with other Christians?

Are you participating in His reconciling work or working against it?

Final Thought: The Gospel Pattern

Notice the pattern throughout 1 Corinthians 6:

1. Indicative (who you are):

You are saints who will judge the world. You were washed, sanctified, justified. Your body is a temple. You were bought with a price.

2. Imperative (what you should do):

Therefore, settle disputes among yourselves. Therefore, flee sexual immorality. Therefore, glorify God in your body.

This is the gospel pattern: God declares who you are in Christ, then calls you to live accordingly. *The doing flows from the being.* The imperatives rest on the indicatives.

Jesus doesn't say: "Clean yourself up, then I'll accept you."

Jesus says: "I've made you clean. Now live like the clean person you are."

This is grace. This is transformation. This is the power of the gospel to change not just your eternal destination, but your daily life.

You are not who you were. You are who Christ has made you to be.

Now become it.

Closing Reflection

The gospel doesn't just save souls—it transforms bodies, relationships, and communities.

Jesus didn't die merely to secure your eternal destination but to make you a new creation *now*.

Paul's message is urgent because the watching world needs to see the transforming power of Jesus. When believers sue each other, when we're easily offended over trivial matters, when we indulge in sexual immorality—we tell the world that Jesus doesn't really change people. But when we forgive wrongs, pursue unity, and flee from sin, we display the reality of Christ's resurrection power working in us.

The Central Question: Are you becoming who you already are in Christ, or are you rolling back into your old form?

The beauty of the gospel is that transformation isn't about trying harder—it's about believing more deeply in who Jesus says you are and allowing His Spirit to work that reality out in your daily life. You are washed. You are sanctified. You are justified. You belong to Christ. Your body is His temple. You were bought with the precious blood of Jesus. This isn't aspirational—it's declarative. It's already true. **Now live like it.**

Prayer for the Week

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that I am no longer who I was. Thank You for washing me, sanctifying me, justifying me through Jesus Christ and by Your Holy Spirit. Help me to truly believe and live out this new identity.

Forgive me for the ways I've rolled back into old patterns—for caring more about winning than loving, for flirting with sexual immorality rather than fleeing, for forgetting that my body is Your temple.
Jesus, You suffered the ultimate wrong for me. Give me grace to absorb small wrongs for the sake of Your gospel and Your church's witness. Help me to flee from sin with the same urgency that I run toward You.
Holy Spirit, remind me daily that I am not my own, that I was bought with the precious blood of Christ.
Empower me to glorify God in my body—in what I do, where I go, what I watch, and how I treat others.
Make our church a community that displays Your transforming power to a watching world. May they see in us evidence that Jesus truly changes people.
Help me become who I already am in Christ.

In Jesus' name, Amen.