

UNITED to live in unity and purity.

1 Corinthians 6

MPS: Christians live in unity of fellowship and purity of life for God's eternal glory because of salvation in Jesus.

OBJ: Every person can live in unity and purity by applying four cross-shaped principles.

INTRO We are in a new series entitled UNITED: Together in the Gospel, a study of 1 Corinthians. IN this series we are laboring for one thing, to live as a people united in the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Unity fuels God's people for kingdom mission in the world.**

READ 1 Cor 6

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 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.

Flee Sexual Immorality

¹² "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³ "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

TRANS 1 Corinthians 6 finds Paul addressing another situation in the Corinthian church. One member of the church has taken another member to court because of some wrong committed against him. By Paul's description, it surrounds a disagreement over some form of personal property. The two involved are likely wealthier, since not many owned property worthy fighting over in this manner. The grievance disrupted the church causing division and ignoring a Christian commitment to one another.

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Paul poses a striking series of questions that say more than they ask. With his first question Paul's disagreement with the situation stands out. Christians were going before the unrighteous in civil court, instead of the church, to solve matters of division among individuals in the church. Paul doesn't degrade the civil courts, but condemns what the divisions are doing to the church's unity and public witness.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that Christians will judge the world. And, he states that Christians will even judge angels. Since Christians are to judge the whole world, they are qualified to judge more trivial, personal matters. But when Christians

take personal matters before the civil courts, they act as though there is no one qualified to settle the dispute between brothers in the church. **No matter who wins, the church loses when Christians file lawsuits to settle personal matters against one another.**

Paul states that Christians should be ready to suffer wrong, even be defrauded, in order to avoid this type of division and dis-unity. But instead of risking being defrauded, they wrong and defraud others. Instead of entrusting themselves to the Lordship of Jesus through the church, they put matters into the hands of non-Christians for judgment. They prefer the church bear a testimony of division and disunity in the world rather than having to be personally defrauded in any way.

ILLUS I've watched Christian brothers get wronged by other Christians. Even when the struggle over how to respond was difficult because the loss was very real and significant, the blessing of not pursuing litigation was chosen. We can't always measure outcomes in this life. But we can know that God always honors the person that chooses to trust their life in His hands.

Paul's sharpest rebuke is that the Corinthian's actions demonstrate a lack of understanding of their new identity in Christ. They couldn't bear the thought of being defrauded, nor entrust their lives to other Christians because they relegated Christ's sacrifice. What must this REALLY say to the world about God defeating sin and death, when He can't even settle disputes about significantly less and incomparable matters among his own children. When the church hands off matters to the world, the gospel gets bypassed because the world doesn't believe it, let alone trust Jesus to think that it has anything to do with disputes. **The church's witness suffers when Christians live divided because each individual matters more than the whole.**

Salvation in Jesus Christ means the gospel applies to all of life. What good is eternal life in Christ if it makes no difference in the here and now of life? Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* (John 10:10b) When we chose personal victory, safety, comfort or revenge, we deny that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient, demand that others suffer instead of us, and that we are worthy to avoid all suffering and receive all glory. **The gospel leads Christians to value and guard the church's witness in the world through unity among brothers and sisters more than personal benefit.**

TRANS This sounds so good in theory. **But how does one do this?**

Paul appeals to our righteous inheritance as our greatest blessing. He provides a list to remind many of their former way of living, the emptiness that it proved, and that none who continued in these lifestyles would inherit the kingdom of God. The list includes all forms of sexual immorality, idolaters, adulterers, those who actively practice homosexuality, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. This list is not to be taken lightly, nor the severe warning that Paul gives for anyone who continues in these lifestyles. People who remain in the continual, active practice of sinful lifestyles do not inherit the kingdom of God. **Salvation in Jesus either makes a change in this life, or it makes no difference whatsoever in your life.**

"And such were some of you." "Were" is a past-tense verbal form, meaning that what it refers to is no longer a present tense reality. All I can think when I read this is, "Yep. I 'were'." *"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."* "But" is a conjunction that changes with immediacy the outcome of what preceded because of what follows, salvation in Jesus. The second "were" means there was also a past moment when everything changed because of Jesus. Paul is not describing how salvation works here, but it's effects and what we are because of Jesus. He is helping us understand the affect of salvation on our lives. **Christian, you are NOT what you "were" because of Jesus, who He is and what He has done. But now because of Him, you are who you are becoming and one day will perfectly be.**

ILLUS Song Lyrics – We Will Remember, by Tommy Walker

v.3: I still remember the day you saved me, the day I heard you call out my name.
You said you loved me, would never leave me. And I've never been the same.

APPL Christian, we must stop thinking of people the way they were before Jesus and start seeing them because of what Jesus has done for them. In order to do this, you must stop thinking of yourself the way you were before Jesus and start seeing yourself because of what Jesus has done for you. We steal Jesus' glory when we think of His people without Him, when we see them in such a way that fails to calculate his salvation upon them. **Jesus is the new, defining reality for the Christian in every aspect of life and the church.**

TRANS Everything Paul is talking about in chapter 6 swings on the "hinge" of verse 11. The unity of the church is anchored in the work of Jesus on the cross. Trusting the gospel for congregational unity poses a great challenge to the church, just as trusting the gospel for personal purity does for each Christian. Paul moves to address sexual immorality and purity of life.

Using some of their own Christian liberty mantras, Paul conditions factual truths with wise application. "All things are lawful for me", they say with theological precision. But theological precision doesn't always equal an absolute in application. **An eternal perspective equips Christians to live with wise discernment above absolute liberty.**

Two additional "wisdom layers" help Christians apply liberty. First, all things that are lawful should also be helpful. "Helpful" means more than just the personal sense of preference, but in the purposeful sense of one's Christian witness in the world. **Second,** nothing should dominate a Christian. No matter how good something may be, nothing should control the Christian's life other than Jesus Christ. Nothing. **Christians live wisely when freedoms are prioritized to serve Jesus' kingdom, and not personal agendas.**

Paul draws a distinction between secondary, non-essentials matters and essential matters that relate to Christian identity. Food and eating are important for a person, but they are not the same as sexuality and identity. Sexual immorality was so common the Corinthians tried to equate the activity of sexual immorality as equal to eating. **Christians go awry in faithfulness when we make too much of secondary matters and too little of essential matters.**

Paul confronts them by distinguishing that eating is for the body, but the body is for the Lord, not sexual immorality. Sexual immorality applies as a broad reference to all sexual activity outside of the covenant relationship between a man and a woman. He establishes his argument on two points. First, the body's purpose is for the Lord and will be raised, as Christ was raised, because we are a member of Christ. Second, he draws from the creational command, "the two will become one flesh" to establish his argument. What occurs in eating is for here and now, and can honor God. What occurs in sexual intercourse lasts within that person. Eating food may or may not betray Christian faithfulness in one area of wisdom or another, depending on whether someone allows food to control them or not. But sexual intercourse joins one with another to become one flesh. Christians who are one with Christ are joined by spirit. Flesh, the mortal, serves spirit, the immortal, either to build it or destroy it. Joined in "one flesh" by sexual immorality denies and betrays the spirit that joins one with Christ. The resurrection will change some aspects of our bodies, like the effect of food. But it will not change anything that is now true about our now-true identity in Christ. **Sexual immorality always betrays Christian faithfulness because it forsakes and denies our identity in Jesus.**

Paul tells the Corinthians to stop sexual immorality because it opposes faithful obedience to God. In Christ, we are one with God through Jesus, one with Jesus by Holy Spirit, and one with God's people as a member of Christ. Sexual immorality makes a person "one" with a prostitute, which is completely incompatible with Christian ethics and standard of behavior, and means the person is dominated by the "prostitute". The Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. How we treat our bodies demonstrates how we hallow Christ in our life. Christians live in the body in such a way that is true to what Christ has accomplished for us in spirit. **Purity in life is our defining Christian ethic because it demonstrates Christ's righteousness put upon us in salvation.**

MPS: Christians live in unity of fellowship and purity of life for God's eternal glory because of salvation in Jesus.

TRANS How do Christians live faithful to our salvation in Jesus?

Paul teaches the Corinthians, and Christians today, how to live in light of the cross of Jesus Christ. Because of the cross of Jesus Christ we are not what we once “were”, and we now are what we will one day be. [The cross of Jesus Christ changes everything for the person who hears and believes.](#) Gospel transformation bears out in our lives as we live in a cross-forged understanding of life.

OBJ: 4 principles equip Christians to live in cross-forged unity and purity.

Note: Forge requires ‘heat and hammering’ to produce the desired shape. ‘Heat and hammering’ for the Christian comes through ‘hardship and humility’ of life. Hardship is produced by any expression of our sinful nature, activity or influence that tempts us to forsake and deny Jesus. Humility forges us into beautiful craftsmanship as we place our faith in Jesus to trust and obey His will and way to live and love. A cross-forged life is never easy, but it is always more glorious and satisfying.

First, unity and purity are first priorities for Christians as a living testimony to salvation in Jesus.

Unity is to God’s people what purity is to each, individual Christian. Jesus died to purchase your salvation and put His righteousness on you. (2 Cor 5:21) Jesus ransomed people for God by his blood from every tribe, language, people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God. (Rev 5:9-10) Neither unity nor purity are something we produce in our lives or congregation, but what we enjoy because of Jesus and live out of when we follow Jesus by faith. Both are determined by the gospel. Both bear a testimony of God’s glory through Jesus Christ to the world. [Salvation in Jesus Christ leads every Christian to live all of life in distinctive obedience through unity and purity.](#)

Unity and purity are MUCH MORE than just an ethic or morality of outward actions. Unity is true about the church before it is ever produced by the church. Purity is true about a person before it is ever lived out by a person. Unity and purity are defining truths of a redeemed identity in Jesus Christ that determines a new ethic and morality from which Christians live. THIS, and only this, is how a Christian brings glory to God in all things. [When Jesus is not your defining motivation and Holy Spirit is not your source of strength for living, God will never be your all-consuming object of glory.](#)

The Christian priority to live in purity of life and unity with the church both source from Jesus’ cross. When you live in or practice immorality in your life, you bear a false testimony about what Jesus did for you. When you live in disunity with the church, you bear a testimony of denial for what Jesus has done. Christian, you are not your own in salvation. You are not ‘dominated’ by a prostitute, a controlling practice, substance, philosophy, ideology or anything other than Jesus. Jesus is your Lord. He is your master. He purchased you with his blood. You have no right to forsake Him. You were bought with a price to honor God with your body, and you are a member of Christ’s body to live in unity. [Purity in life and unity in the church are a faithful testimony of being washed, sanctified and justified, purchased by Jesus. Christians follow Jesus in purity and unity as an expression of our blood-bought, Jesus-saved, Christ-redeemed, cross-forged, Spirit-filled, God-glorifying life.](#)

Second, Christian liberties never license to sin and should always be ready to be sacrificed for Kingdom mission.

No man was more free than Jesus. But he willingly endeared himself through humble obedience to the will of the Father and surrendered every liberty. His sacrifice means we know and live for God. His life modeled for how we are to live. Jesus never claimed any personal right, but willingly laid down everything to remain faithful to the Father. [Christians trust Jesus’ sacrifice and model his obedience when we lay down our rights and liberties to serve God’s eternal purpose.](#)

Christians live in obedience by faith in response to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Every situation, activity and opportunity in life should be filtered through three questions to help apply a faith-driven application of Christian liberties.

1. [What does God’s Word teach on this subject? Does it allow or forbid?](#)
2. [Will this activity prove helpful for my obedience to Christ?](#)

Though something may be allowable, Christians look beyond allowance to measure its benefit: “will this be helpful?” Helpful doesn’t mean for me, personally, but as I live my life for Christ. Christ fills the center of my values, affections or decisions. I must ask, “Will this help bring Jesus’ glory in my life?”

- a. Will it prove helpful to my faithful witness of Jesus before others?
 - b. Will it prove helpful to encourage the faithfulness of other Christians?
 - c. Will it prove helpful to encourage other people to trust and follow Jesus?
3. Will this activity dominate, control or impair my life in any way? Though something may be allowable, Christians measure its affect on life. Nothing is allowed in life that seeks a position of control over my life when Christ is Lord.

TRANS In an increasingly sexualized culture, we need to be reminded.

Third, sexual immorality is something to flee from, never flirt with.

When you sin sexually, you destroy yourself by deceiving your ‘inner being’ about your true identity. Sexual sin is not a “worse sin” than any other, in some measure of human categories. Rather, it’s relation to the body is unique, and as such it affects a person in unique ways. All sin deceives, about God, the world, other people, how you relate to the world, etc. But sexual immorality compounds deception and condemnation by confusing a person about themselves at the deepest level of personal understanding and identity. Sexual activity is a ‘direct connect’ to, an ‘outlet’ of the human soul. When your body engages in sexual activity, you give expression and grant access to your soul. Sexual immorality hastens mental decay as it confuses a person about identity (who I am) and purpose (why I exist). Sexual activity is always a damaging and condemning endeavor when it is not protected under the covenant of marriage. **Christian, you are not bound or dominated by our sexual desires because we are bought with a price and ruled by Christ.** Put it where it belongs, under full submission to Jesus Christ lest it put you in the only place it leads, in the soul’s grave.

Sexual sin confronts the most basic truth for a Christian that you are Jesus’, and none other. Christian identity in Jesus Christ is the only sufficient truth to combat sexual temptation and sin. 1 Corinthians 6:11 truth declaration, “I’m not what I ‘were’ but AM what I will be” is Jesus’ promise of forgiveness and cleansing from sin IS true even for the person in sexual sin when by faith they repent and trust Christ. **Union with Jesus Christ by Holy Spirit in salvation by faith IS greater than sexual temptations that threaten with pleased freedom and hopeful promise.**

Sexual immorality is not limited to only the physical. Lest you think you have avoided sexual immorality because it has not involved a physical adultery or fornication with another person, let me offer this strong warning. Sexual immorality that joins you with another person in mind or emotion, as the pornography industry has perfected, equally betrays the Christian’s “spirit of oneness” with Christ. Studies show that the effects of pornography re-program the mind. **The mind of Christ is central to the Christian life. You cannot be joined to Christ in spirit and surrender your mind to be dominated by another master.**

Christians flee sexual immorality. Run from it. Mercilessly and ruthlessly kill it! Give no allowance for it! Sexual immorality dominates every heart and mind that it inhabits. We, Christians, are the church. We are Christ’s people, each one his child. We celebrate purity to live it out by faith. However, neither Christians nor the church ever shuns those caught in sexual sin. **Jesus is our sufficient Savior who rescues and redeems even from sexual immorality.**

Fourth, Christians live with one, defining focus, the glory of God in all things that we do in life.

God is the unifying glory for our lives in purity and unity. There is no aspect or part of life that is not fully submitted to glorify God. **Christians live with an eternal perspective on all of life that directs our hearts to value everything in light of the cross.**

CLOSE

- ? How strong is the church’s unity because Jesus leads your life?
 - o Are you airing your grievances about the church in public for the world to hear?

- Or, are you laboring within the church to reconcile wrong-doings among “brothers and / or sisters in Christ” to grow an increasing gospel impact for God’s glory?
- ? How strong is purity in your life because of Jesus?
- Are you living for personal pleasure and indulgence out of freedoms, or are you living in purity to glorify God with your whole life, including your body?
 - Does it matter more to you that you get pleased and satisfied, or that the world sees and hear a faithful witness of God?