

1 Corinthians Part 2

You Are Not Your Own

BIG IDEA Because believers have been washed, sanctified, justified, and bought by Christ, they honor God in their bodies and relationships, practice restorative discipline, and receive both marriage and singleness as opportunities for faithful service.

Purpose and outcome

By the end of the lesson, the class should be able to:

- trace belonging to Christ as the thread connecting discipline, lawsuits, sexuality, marriage, and singleness;
- explain why church discipline protects Christ's people and aims at repentance and restoration;
- show how resurrection, union with Christ, and the Holy Spirit give Christian bodily holiness its gospel foundation;
- describe marriage and singleness as distinct forms of faithful service rather than higher and lower spiritual classes; and
- apply Paul's teaching with moral clarity, gospel hope, and appropriate protection for people facing crime, coercion, abandonment, or abuse.

Lesson at a glance

TIME	MOVEMENT
0:00-5:00	Opening question, prayer, and Lesson 9 connection
5:00-14:00	Belonging to Christ in the church - 5:1-13
14:00-20:00	Belonging to Christ in conflict - 6:1-11
20:00-31:00	Belonging to Christ in the body - 6:12-20
31:00-43:00	Belonging to Christ in marriage and singleness - chapter 7
43:00-47:00	The Gospel Then and Now
47:00-50:00	Summary, homework, and prayer

Before class

Write on the board: What does it mean to say that a Christian's body and relationships belong to Christ?

Controlling question: How does belonging to Christ reshape the church's response to serious sin, conflict, sexuality, marriage, and singleness?

Mark 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, 9-13; 6:1-11, 12-20; and 7:1-7, 10-16, 25-35. Use one reader and participants' own Bibles.

CORE READINGS Read 5:1-8; 6:9-20; and selected portions of chapter 7. Summarize the lawsuits in 6:1-8 and the calling discussion in 7:17-24. If discussion expands, protect time for 6:11-20 and the final movement through chapter 7.

The whole lesson in one claim

Chapters 5-7 address different cases, but Paul's answer repeatedly returns to identity and ownership. The congregation is Christ's holy people. Believers have been washed, sanctified, justified, united to Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, and bought at a price. Bodies, conflicts, marriages, and callings therefore belong under Christ's lordship.

PASTORAL POSTURE Teach these chapters as gospel-shaped discipleship, not as a culture-war lecture. Speak clearly about sin, but do not invite public disclosure or ask the class to decide another person's marriage, divorce, sexual history, or safety plan.

1. CORE Restorative holiness in the church

Read 5:1-8. A man is living sexually with his father's wife, probably his stepmother, in violation of the biblical prohibition echoed from Leviticus 18. The surrounding cultures also regarded this relationship as scandalous. Paul is equally disturbed that the church is proud or complacent rather than grieved.

Paul commands the church to remove the man from fellowship and hand him over to Satan. The most likely social meaning is exclusion from the gathered church into the world outside. The phrase 'destruction of the flesh' may refer to severe bodily consequences or to the breaking of sinful self-reliance. Either way, the stated goal is salvation on the Lord's Day. Discipline is serious and painful, but restorative rather than vindictive.

The Passover image supplies the gospel logic. Christ, the Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed; therefore the church removes the old yeast and lives as the holy people his death has made it. A little yeast spreads through the dough. Persistent public sin that the church celebrates or excuses can reshape the whole community.

GUARDRAIL Paul echoes Deuteronomy's command to remove covenant-breaking evil from God's people, but he commands exclusion, not physical punishment. Discipline must never become harassment, humiliation, violence, or a pretext for controlling people.

Judging insiders and outsiders

Read 5:9-13. Paul does not tell the church to withdraw from all immoral unbelievers; that would require leaving the world. The church is responsible for accountable fellowship among those who claim the name of Christ. Refusing normal fellowship with a persistently unrepentant member makes clear that the church cannot affirm the profession while ignoring the conduct.

TEACHING LINE Christians are not commissioned to police every unbeliever's morality. The church must, however, take persistent and public sin among professing believers seriously while seeking repentance and restoration.

Paul also mentions an earlier letter that has not survived. The class has already noticed that 1 Corinthians was not necessarily Paul's first communication with Corinth. Scholars commonly reconstruct several letters and visits, including a later severe or tearful letter, but the missing-letter chronology need not consume this lesson.

2. CORE Conflict lawsuits and gospel identity

Summarize 6:1-8. Corinthian believers are taking one another before public magistrates over grievances that appear to involve property, money, fraud, or personal advantage. The church that boasts in wisdom cannot find a wise and impartial person to help settle disputes. Worse, believers are wronging and defrauding one another.

- Paul urges the church to seek wise, impartial judgment and reconciliation rather than public contests for honor and advantage.
- His willingness to suffer loss rather than defraud another believer reflects the self-giving pattern of Christ.
- The passage does not require concealing crimes, bypassing mandatory reporting, remaining in danger, or denying victims access to civil protection. Romans 13 assigns public authorities responsibility for wrongdoing.

SAFETY AND LAW Criminal conduct, abuse, threats, child endangerment, and matters requiring legal protection are not merely private church disputes. Report crimes, protect vulnerable people, and involve appropriate civil authorities.

Washed sanctified and justified

Read 6:9-11. Paul lists patterns of life that contradict inheriting God's kingdom. The list is serious but not exhaustive. Its gospel center is verse 11: some Corinthians had lived in these ways, but God washed, sanctified, and justified them in the name of Jesus and by the Spirit. Grace forgives and creates a new identity that begins producing a changed life.

TEACHING THE VICE LIST Read the list without embarrassment and without selecting one group as the lesson's exhibit. The historic Christian reading understands Paul's sexual terms to include same-sex sexual practice. Paul addresses conduct, not modern scientific questions about the causes of attraction or the experience of temptation. Same-sex sexual sin is neither approved nor placed beyond Christ's forgiveness.

3. CORE The body belongs to the Lord

Read 6:12-20. 'I have the right to do anything' and 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food' probably repeat Corinthian slogans. They treat bodily appetite as morally unimportant. Paul qualifies their freedom: not everything is beneficial, and he will not be mastered by anything.

- The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

- God raised Jesus and will raise believers; the body is part of God's saving future, not disposable packaging.
- Believers' bodies are members of Christ. Sexual union cannot be detached from belonging to him.
- The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Christians are not self-owned because Christ bought them at a price.

Paul's command to flee sexual immorality recognizes the distinctive bodily union created through sex. Do not turn the passage into a claim that sexual sin is uniquely unforgivable or that people with sexual histories are permanently damaged. The same paragraph speaks of Christ's ownership, the Spirit's presence, resurrection, and the command to honor God now.

CENTRAL LINE Christian sexual holiness begins with belonging: Christ bought us, joined us to himself, placed his Spirit within us, and will raise our bodies. Therefore we honor God with our bodies.

4. CORE Marriage singleness and faithful calling

Chapter 7 begins Paul's response to matters raised in the Corinthians' letter. The statement that it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman may repeat an ascetic Corinthian slogan or may be Paul's statement that he immediately qualifies. Either way, Paul rejects both sexual license and the idea that abstinence makes married Christians more spiritual.

Marriage and mutuality

In 7:2-7 Paul gives husband and wife strikingly reciprocal obligations. Each owes loving marital care; neither exercises unilateral ownership. Temporary abstinence requires mutual consent, a limited time, and prayerful purpose. These verses cannot justify coercion, entitlement, assault, or using Scripture to overrule a spouse's safety and consent.

Divorce mixed marriages and peace

In 7:10-16 Paul applies Jesus' teaching against divorce to Christian spouses and then addresses a case Jesus' recorded teaching did not directly discuss: a believer married to an unbeliever. Spiritual difference alone does not invalidate the marriage. If the unbelieving spouse is willing to remain, the believer should not leave. If the unbeliever abandons the marriage, the believer is not bound; God has called believers to peace.

- 'Not I, but the Lord' points to Jesus' recorded teaching. 'I, not the Lord' introduces Paul's apostolic application to a new case; it does not mean the second teaching is uninspired or optional.
- 'Sanctified' spouse and 'holy' children do not mean automatic salvation. The family is set apart through its relationship to the believer and is not religiously contaminated by the mixed marriage.
- Whether 'not bound' explicitly permits remarriage is debated. The Reformed tradition commonly understands willful desertion as dissolving the marriage bond and permitting remarriage, while still treating reconciliation as the proper hope when possible.
- Paul does not address every dangerous modern case. Temporary or permanent separation may be necessary for safety. Abuse requires protection, accountability, and often civil intervention; it must not be hidden behind an abstract command to remain married.

Remain faithfully where God called you

In 7:17-24 Paul repeats that believers can serve Christ within their present social situation. Conversion does not require a new spouse, ethnic identity, job, or social rank to become spiritually legitimate. This is contentment and faithful presence, not passive submission to sin or danger. Paul explicitly allows an enslaved person to gain freedom when possible, though the wording of verse 21 has a known translation debate.

Singleness and the present crisis

In 7:25-40 Paul recommends singleness because of the present crisis, the passing form of this world, and the opportunity for undivided devotion. The crisis may have involved local hardship, broader instability, or the pressures of the closing age; Paul does not specify. His counsel has eschatological urgency without declaring marriage sinful or spiritually inferior. Both marriage and singleness are gifts to be lived faithfully under Christ.

PASTORAL LINE Marriage does not solve every loneliness, temptation, or emotional need. Singleness is not an incomplete life. Christ is Lord of both callings, and both require contentment, community, self-control, and faithful love.

The Gospel Then and Now

MOVEMENT	CHURCH APPLICATION
Church reality then	The Corinthians tolerated public sin, used courts against one another, treated bodies as disposable, and debated sex, marriage, divorce, and singleness.
Church temptation now	Churches can confuse grace with approval, conceal abuse as a private dispute, treat sexual ethics as a political weapon, idolize marriage, or treat singleness as failure.
Gospel-shaped church	Because Christ washed and bought his people, the church pursues restorative holiness, protects the vulnerable, honors God bodily, and supports faithful marriage and singleness.

Discussion

1. What holds the subjects in chapters 5-7 together? Where does Paul return to belonging and identity?
2. How can church discipline communicate both the seriousness of sin and the hope of restoration?
3. Why is verse 11 essential when teaching the vice list in 6:9-10?
4. How do resurrection, union with Christ, and the Holy Spirit answer the claim that bodily choices are merely private?
5. What is the difference between Christian freedom and being mastered by an appetite or desire?
6. How can the church honor marriage without treating singleness as an incomplete Christian life?

Scholarly notes and guardrails

- The father's wife - The wording most naturally suggests a stepmother. Do not speculate about the father's status or other details Paul does not provide.
- Destruction of the flesh - Major readings include severe bodily consequences, even death, and the destruction of sinful self-reliance. Keep Paul's restorative goal in view.
- Eating with the disciplined member - The command removes ordinary fellowship that would communicate acceptance. It does not authorize cruelty or forbid every contact aimed at repentance and restoration.
- Same-sex terminology - The NIV 2011 renders two disputed terms together as 'men who have sex with men.' The historic reading includes both partners in male same-sex intercourse. Explain the conclusion in plain English and keep verse 11 central.
- Sin against the body - Paul stresses the one-flesh union and Christ's claim on the body. Avoid unsupported rankings of sexual sin or claims that survivors and repentant sinners are permanently defiled.
- Paul and Jesus in chapter 7 - Paul's distinction concerns whether a recorded saying of Jesus directly addresses the case, not whether Paul's counsel carries apostolic authority.
- The engaged couple in 7:36-38 - Interpreters debate whether Paul addresses a man and his fiancée or a father and a virgin daughter. The NIV 2011 follows the engaged-couple reading. The main conclusion is stable: marriage is permitted, singleness may be wise, and neither is sin.

Likely rabbit trails

The identity and status of the woman in chapter 5; whether church discipline means complete shunning; every possible lawsuit; culture-war arguments about homosexuality; scientific questions about attraction; ranking sexual sins; contraception; every ground for divorce and remarriage; adjudicating a participant's marriage; the translation of 7:21; and the identity of the couple in 7:36-38. Answer necessary questions, but return to belonging to Christ.

Leader preparation

Commentary and study: Craig L. Blomberg, 1 Corinthians, NIV Application Commentary; David Prior, The Message of 1 Corinthians; Life Application Bible Commentary New Testament, 1 Corinthians; NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible; ESV Study Bible; Craig S. Keener, IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament.

Online resource: BibleProject, Book of 1 Corinthians Guide - bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-1-corinthians/

ECO connection: Essential Tenet III.C, covenant life in the church; and III.E, living in obedience to the Word of God. Official text: eco-pres.org/constitution/

Before Lesson 11: Start with 1 Corinthians 8-10. Continue with chapters 11-14 if possible. Watch for Paul's repeated questions: What builds up the church? How must love govern freedom, worship, and spiritual gifts?