

## The Body is for the Lord

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### Introduction:

From every spot in the city of Corinth, the citizens could see the Acrocorinth, an outcropping of rock the summit of which was dominated by a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, beauty, and fertility. The 1,000 priestesses that served this temple were little more than sacred prostitutes that honored immorality as worship. Corinthians grew up and lived in the shadow of this shrine to sexuality. It is no wonder that when Corinthians became Christians they struggled with issues of sexual immorality. In **I Corinthians 6:12-20**, Paul dealt with this Corinthian baggage. Keep in mind that as the Corinthians read this letter for the first time, they could look out the nearest window and see the temple of “love.” It seems that some tried to argue that just as food was necessary for the stomach, sex was necessary for the body. Food was made for the stomach and the stomach for food. In just such a way, the body was made for sex and sex for the body. But Paul explained this is just not true. The body is for the Lord. Therefore we must glorify the Lord with our body and in our sexuality.

We may not be able to look out our windows and see a shrine to immorality wherever we go. However, like Corinth, we are growing up and living in the shadow of sexual immorality. It is in the movies, on television, in songs. Commercials are filled with it. Billboards display it. Magazines promote it. And everywhere we go, especially at this time of year, folks are dressing for it. It is no surprise then that when modern folks become Christians, they struggle with issues of sexual immorality. The problem for us today is Christians very rarely recognize the spectrum of sexual sin. They merely think of fornication or adultery and believe as long as they have avoided that they are good with God. Yet, notice the works of the flesh in **Galatians 5:19ff**. The first three deal with sexuality. They are sexual immorality, uncleanness, and sensuality. We find the same triumvirate in **II Corinthians 12:21**. We must not only guard against sexual immorality, but also the attitude of mind and conduct of body that lead to it beginning with the sensuality (lasciviousness and licentiousness in other translations).

As we consider this, I am well aware that the Scripture never gives us specific lines for where sensuality begins or exactly what actions are deemed sensuality. Rather, God left us to examine our own actions, attitudes, and motives. However, we need to give some clear thought to this issue to make sure we are glorifying God with our body. Therefore, I don't plan to draw any lines for you. I don't plan to provide a list of taboo actions (though I'm sure I'll mention some I believe cross the line). I simply want to share what the Bible reveals and offer some applications for your thought as you strive to glorify God with your body.

### Discussion:

- I. The spectrum of sexual sin
  - A. As we noted earlier, both **Galatians 5:19** and **II Corinthians 12:21** provide a spectrum of sexual sin. It begins with sensuality, progresses through uncleanness, and ends in sexual immorality. No doubt, these terms all overlap. They do not have clear-cut separate definitions. However, I think they clearly represent a spectrum of sexual sin from the moment it begins in our hearts and minds, progresses into inappropriate behavior, and culminates in immorality.
  - B. Sexual immorality refers to any and all sexual intercourse that is not between a husband and wife (the marriage bed is, of course, undefiled—**Hebrews 13:4**). This includes fornication, adultery, homosexuality, sodomy, incest, and other forms of sexual activity.
  - C. Uncleanness is sometimes used to simply refer to anything that is defiling. However, in the contexts of **Galatians 5:19** and **II Corinthians 12:21**, it is most definitely dealing with a specific issue of sexual uncleanness. **Romans 1:24** demonstrates that uncleanness (in this passage translated “impurity”) is the acting out of the lusts of the heart and flesh. It is when the sexual thoughts of the mind become actions in our lives. In our contexts, it comes between sensuality and sexual immorality. It refers to sexual activity outside of marriage that falls short of actual sexual intercourse. This would include things like pornography, petting, heavy making out, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and other similar forms of sexual activity.
  - D. Sensuality, the term I really want us to notice in this lesson, is all about fleshly lusts. Sensuality is about being driven by our senses of the flesh. Some translations use words like lasciviousness or licentiousness. These refer to whatever expresses or arouses sexuality. This is where it all begins. It refers to an attitude that has little to no shame. The conscience of the sensual is

piqued not pricked by the expression of sexuality outside of marriage. It is excited by and enjoys it. Sensuality refers to conduct that promotes sexuality and sexual thought. Whether a manner of walk that expresses sexuality or a manner of dress that heightens and attracts attention to sexuality (whether with tightness or through revealing too much flesh). It refers to conduct that occurs when aroused. It refers to speech that is sexually driven with hidden meanings and double entendres. Sadly, this is the state of our society almost constantly. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves giving in to this general mode of conduct, dress, and speech.

E. If we can nip our conduct in the bud at the issue of sensuality, then uncleanness and immorality will not be a problem.

II. We must flee sensuality, not become calloused to it.

A. **I Peter 4:1-5** explains our situation. The Gentiles, that is the worldly and non-Christian, are filled with sinful excess. They are surprised when we will not join them. They will malign us and say we aren't normal. They will make fun of us as if we don't behave naturally. They will mock and ridicule us as extremists who don't know how to have fun. But Peter is clear, the time is past for us to behave as they do. We spent enough of our time when we weren't Christians doing those things. It is time for us to put them away. Notice what tops the list of sins we need to put away—sensuality, lasciviousness, licentiousness. Instead of living for sensuality, we need to live for the will of God. If we are dressing, acting, speaking just like the world, something is wrong. There should be a difference.

B. Too many Christians aren't fleeing sensuality. Rather, because of the world in which we live, like the Gentiles, they are becoming hardened and desensitized to it. **Ephesians 4:17-19** talks about the Gentiles. Because they are alienated from God and their hearts are hardened, they are calloused to sensuality. It is the norm. It doesn't faze them. It doesn't impact them. Actually it does. They just don't realize it. They do not see how it is building a foundation of immorality in their hearts and minds that will naturally spill out into action. Some Christians keep wondering why they can't seem to stop their uncleanness and immorality. They have said again and again they won't ever do that, but they keep falling back into it. The problem is they have become calloused to sensuality and don't realize what it is doing to them.

C. Sadly, I hear Christians today respond to sermons about men and women swimming together in their skimpy outfits, sermons about dancing as it occurs in most clubs and school dances, sermons about modest apparel, sermons about what they watch on television and the movies by saying, "There is so much worse out there, that just doesn't affect me." I realize we are all different. Therefore, different things arouse each of us. Therefore, my list of things I have to avoid doesn't have to be your list. However, I want you to notice from this concept of callousness that claiming something doesn't affect you is not always a good thing. It may be that it doesn't seem to affect you anymore because you're involved in so much more that you have become calloused. Sensuality is like drinking intoxicating drinks. I've heard too many Christians claim that one or two drinks won't affect them. How do they know? Because they've drunk so much more than that they've developed a tolerance. One drink doesn't give them the buzz it used to. Brothers and sisters, that is not a good thing. It isn't good with intoxicants and it isn't good when it comes to sensuality. We must flee sensuality, not become calloused to it.

III. The means and methods of sensuality.

A. How do men and women display sensuality? On the one hand, I'd like to think that we can just say, "Don't be sensual," and everyone gets it. Sadly, as calloused to sensuality as our society is, we need to get a little more specific. The Bible actually gets specific about sensual things. It talks about what arouses men and women in a physical way. I want to share with you not what I think, but what the Bible actually demonstrates. Before I do, I want to give some caveats.

1. The Bible does not say that beauty is a sin.
2. The Bible does not say to be righteous you have to try to make yourself ugly.
3. The things I'm about to share with you have a place in our lives, but they are between husbands and wives.
4. What I'm about to share with you is not intended to cause any of us, whether men or women, to think we have to wear a shawl from head to foot in order to avoid being sensual.

Rather, I just want us to be aware of how our bodies and the way we present them can provoke sensuality. We need to take care and be rigorously honest about the reasons for how we dress, how we talk, how we make ourselves up.

- B. We find this look at sensuality in **Song of Solomon**. We see both issues of how a man can be viewed sensually and a woman. In this book, it is actually talking about the relationship between a husband and wife. Therefore, in this book it is glorified. That is the proper place for sexual expression, arousal, and activity. However, sadly, too many today take these things which are glorified in marriage and bring them out for all the world to see. Examine with me the means by which this married couple heighten their lawful sensuality and sexual expression to note where we need to take care outside of marriage.
- C. Men—**Song of Solomon 5:10-16**. We generally think of the physical issues of sensuality being what the women must be concerned about. However, this story demonstrates that men must be careful in the physical realm as well. We have to ask about our motives in the way we present our bodies.
1. Skin—**Song of Solomon 5:10**. He is radiant and ruddy. Ruddy refers to a red color. It demonstrates the issue of a deep tanning. No, there is nothing wrong with having a tan. But why? What is your goal? Is it to attract sexual attention?
  2. Hair—**Song of Solomon 5:11**. Why do those guys on the covers of romance novels always have that long, thick, full head of hair, gently lifted by some unseen breeze? Interestingly, I was watching a television show on the Internet this week and was repeatedly subjected to a commercial for a shampoo. The tag line was use this shampoo and get girl-approved hair. One of the statements was, “Guys, if you want to hook up you have to fix your hair.” For our older generation, hooking up doesn’t just mean having a girlfriend, it means having sex.
  3. Eyes—**Song of Solomon 5:12**. No, you don’t have to gouge out your eyes to keep from being sensual. However, we need to realize that we can convey messages with our eyes. A glance at the right moment. A certain facial expression can say it all.
  4. Cheeks—**Song of Solomon 5:13**. Women swoon over chiseled features.
  5. Lips, mouth—**Song of Solomon 5:13, 16**. The mouth can be very sensual both in how it looks and what comes out of it.
  6. Arms, body, legs—**Song of Solomon 5:14-15**. I can’t help but think of those who spend hours on top of hours working out in the gym to give that amazing physique. No, it is not wrong to work out. But make sure if you are that your goal is health, not hoping others will lust after you.
- D. Women—**Song of Solomon 4:1-11; 6:5-7:9**.
1. Breasts—**Song of Solomon 4:5; 7:3, 7**. I know we are not surprised to find this on the list. I put it first because usually it is the only thing we think about in the context of modesty and sensuality. With today’s dress codes, we need to think about it. The style is form fitting. While the flesh may not be revealed, the breasts are not concealed but accentuated. Certainly, cleavage revealing outfits need to be rethought. However, this is not all.
  2. Eyes—**Song of Solomon 4:1, 9; 6:5; 7:4**. Just take a look at the latest make-up commercials. The way you fix your eyes is certainly presented as sexual in many of these. By the way, **Proverbs 6:25** says the adulteress catches her prey with her eyelashes.
  3. Hair—**Song of Solomon 4:1; 6:5; 7:5**. As for the men, the way a woman does her hair can be sensual. Remember that when Peter talked about modesty among women in **1 Peter 3:3**, he explained your adornment shouldn’t be about the “braiding of hair.”
  4. Teeth—**Song of Solomon 4:2; 6:6**. I know this is shocking on this list. Yet, again we need to take care about our purpose behind how we present ourselves.
  5. Lips, mouth—**Song of Solomon 4:3; 7:8-9**. What does everyone remember about Angelina Jolie? Her lips. Why do so many want the puffy, pouty, botox-smoothed mouth and lips? Is it because they know it is sensual?
  6. Cheeks—**Song of Solomon 4:3; 6:7**.
  7. Neck—**Song of Solomon 4:4; 7:4**.
  8. Jewelry—**Song of Solomon 4:9**. What are you accentuating with the jewelry you wear?
  9. Perfume—**Song of Solomon 4:6, 11**. Just watch the commercials about perfume to learn what many of the manufacturers are promoting.

10. Feet—**Song of Solomon 7:1**. What is the motivation behind the latest pedicure?
11. Thighs—**Song of Solomon 7:1**. What is the purpose behind the skirt or shorts that show your thighs when you sit down? Are you wearing something you constantly have to pull down?
12. Navel and belly—**Song of Solomon 7:2**. What is up with midriff revealing shirts and hip hugger pants? What do you want men to notice?
13. Stature—**Song of Solomon 7:7**. This word is specifically an issue of height. However, the idea I get from it is one of carriage. The way you walk, the way you stand. How do you simply present yourself? Is it provocatively? Sisters (not brothers), watch a video of models walking the runway. Their strut and stance is all about sexuality. Are you mimicking them?
14. Words—**Proverbs 5:3; 6:24**. It is possible to be dressed in a completely modest way but speak immodestly. Dropping double entendres, trying to steer the conversation into sexual realms, pushing the envelope of propriety in order to test the waters. In a marital counseling session, a wife who had cheated on her husband once told me that she could tell when she could seduce a man by the way she talked to him and how he reacted. Are we testing the sexual waters or creating sexual tension with our speech? Some women like to tease and they use words to do it.

E. I know this list is pretty shocking. I want to reiterate some points before I'm misunderstood. First, remember that in the context of these passages (except **Proverbs 5:3; 6:24**) all of these things we just mentioned were glorified. However, they were glorified in marriage. Each of these great qualities are to be shared between husband and wife. Second, I have not presented these things to say it is wrong for men to work out or it is wrong for women to wear sandals and have pedicures. Rather, I just want us to see that each of these aspects of our bodies can be used sensually. We need to make sure we are not presenting our bodies in a sensual fashion to the world in general. We need to give thought to how we speak, how we dress, how we stand, how we walk, how we look. We need to be rigorously honest. Are we hoping to be noticed for our apparent strength, our tanned skin, our shapely bodies? The issue is not just do we lust after others but do we want others to lust after us? Some are saying, "I would never commit fornication, but I feel good when others notice me in that way." That is the beginning of immorality. It is on that spectrum and we need to flee it, not be calloused to it.

#### IV. Don't pervert God's grace into sensuality.

- A. **Jude 4** provides a warning. Some Christians will pervert the grace of God into sensuality. In this context, I believe the term "sensuality" is not limited to sexual sensuality but just the lusts of the flesh whether it be with gluttony, covetousness, drunkenness, or sexuality. Yet, our topic is included. Some use God's grace to justify their sensuality even in the sexual realm.
- B. I don't know how many times I've heard or read as Christian women have defended wearing bikinis while around men other than their husbands because they can't find a law specifically stating that is wrong. What are they doing? They are looking to Christianity as a system of grace and suggesting they can dress however they want without thought or concern. Men just shouldn't lust. Besides, since it is all about grace and not about pursuing personal holiness, why does it matter? I'll do what I want and get forgiveness later.
- C. God's grace is not given to us so that we will have no concern for these matters. God's grace is given to us so we may be free to pursue holiness. Our bodies are for the Lord (**1 Corinthians 6:13**). Therefore, we need to glorify God with our bodies (**1 Corinthians 6:20**). We do not need to exhibit our sexuality or sexiness. God's grace does not mean we may pursue our senses as much as we want. God's grace means we are forgiven from having done so for so long. God's grace means we can be granted the strength to overcome the flesh and pursue the things of the Spirit. Don't pervert God's grace into a defense of sensuality.

#### V. How to overcome sensuality.

- A. Finally, **Mark 7:21-23** says sensuality begins in the heart. Therefore, if we want to overcome sensuality, we have to get our heart right. We have to start with our attitudes. I know some today want to establish dress codes. If we force everyone to wear a certain length of pants and dresses, then we'll be overcoming sensuality. That just isn't true. Clothes themselves can ex-

press sensuality. The issue is get the heart right. As **I Peter 3:3-4** demonstrates, we need to let our adornment be the internal person. What needs to be demonstrated is not the clothes, jewelry, hairstyle, but the inner person that displays a gentle and quiet spirit. When we no longer have a heart that wants to attract people to us, but rather wants to point people to God, modesty and sensuality will be dealt with.

- B. **Galatians 5:19** highlighted these works of the flesh. In contrast, we must pursue the fruit of the Spirit as seen in **Galatians 5:22-23**. The first of this fruit is love. If we have hearts that pursue love, sensuality won't be a problem. Sensuality is a selfish expression. It is all about trying to get folks to be attracted to self. Sensuality is about folks thinking we are great. Love is about lifting others up. It is about helping them overcome the flesh. It is about giving to them and putting them above us. If we pursue real love, then sensuality won't be a problem. I've heard someone say that lust kills love. Just so, love will kill lust, if we will pursue love.
- C. I know after that list of potentially sensual displays from **Song of Solomon**, many are going to be wondering where is the line. Here is the line. Get the heart right and the body will follow. In fact, when the heart is right, you won't be worried about the lines because you won't want to hover at the line. You'll want to let your body be for the Lord.

### **Conclusion:**

**I Corinthians 6:13** says our body is for the Lord. That doesn't just mean avoid fornication and adultery. That means avoid the sensuality that leads to it. That means we must present ourselves with a modesty and shamefacedness that will cause us to stand out among the worldly. They will mock us. However, we will be glorifying God. Some of them, as they see our Spirit-changed behavior, will take note and want the peace, joy, and love that come from glorifying God. Don't ask yourself how long your shorts have to be, ask yourself how you can glorify God with your body. Avoid sensuality. It is a work of the flesh.