

## Sin in the Church



### SABBATH—JULY 18

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 1 Corinthians 6:1–13; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8; 1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “You should know that your body is a temple for the Holy Spirit that you received [got] from God and that lives in you. You don’t own yourselves. God paid a very high [expensive] price to make you his. So honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, ERV).

**OUR BRAINS** are much the same as sponges. Sponges soak up water very easily. In the same way, what we put in our minds stays there, the same as water in a sponge. Maybe we don’t remember everything that enters our minds. (If we did, we’d have trouble thinking!) But everything we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch is all there in our minds. These things can change what we think, feel, and do.

So, we must be careful. As Christians, we must not let the bad things around us change us for the worse. Sad to say, the Christian church in Corinth had this problem from the start.

Paul warned the church not to separate into groups (1 Corinthians 1–4). Paul also talked about sex sins; going to court against other members; selling sex for pay; marriage; and staying single. Church members often acted the same way that non-Christians did. The separations that Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 1–4 caused the problems that Paul warned against in later chapters. How does Paul solve the sin problems in the church? What lessons can we learn from his experience?



Everything we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch is all there in our minds.

## WHEN WHAT WE SAY DOESN'T MATCH WHAT WE DO (1 Corinthians 5:1–13)

All during Christian history, pastors, thinkers, and church members studied the New Testament to learn about the church. They wondered, “What makes the church a success?” They also asked, “What is the best way for church members to work together?” The amazing stories about the church in the book of Acts show us the answers. But often, we don't remember an important part of the stories: people have problems. So, we can read the New Testament to see also what a church should **not** do. Paul's letters to the Corinthians can help us understand that better.

**Read 1 Corinthians 5:1–13. What problem does Paul talk about in these verses? Why is this problem so awful?**

Paul uses the words “his stepmother” (1 Corinthians 5:1, ICB). So, the verses show that a man is having sex with his stepmother. Earlier, Paul wrote, “People from Chloe's house have told me news about you” (1 Corinthians 1:11, EASY). The news Paul is talking about may be this relationship between this man and his stepmother. Sex between family members is a terrible sin. That's why Paul says, “Even people who do not know God do not do things as bad as that!” (1 Corinthians 5:1, EASY). And this sin is now happening in a Christian church during New Testament times? Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2 show us that the news surprises and upsets him.

As bad as this sin is, the problem gets worse. Paul gets more upset when he learns that the Corinthians aren't sorry or ashamed of the problem in their church. They are filled with pride because they welcomed this man into the church as a member (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2). Worse, the Corinthians are bragging about it (1 Corinthians 5:2, 6)! Paul wants to correct the problem with the man. Paul also wants to correct the church. The church isn't living what they believe. Paul is so upset with the church. What is wrong with these people?

We don't really know why the church accepted this man. Maybe he was rich and gave the church a lot of money. Then the church became ‘blind’ to his sin (Leviticus 18:7, 8). Worse, in Paul's eyes, they bragged about it!

**What things do we accept that the Bible warns against?**



**Paul gets more upset when he learns that the Corinthians aren't sorry or ashamed of the problem in their church.**

## SEX SINS IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 5:1–13)

What must we do when there are sex sins in the church? What is the best way to solve the problem? The answer isn't always easy. The problem was hard for Paul to solve. The problem is hard for us to solve, too. So, what do we do? We must follow the Bible. We must pray and act with love. We want the person who is being punished to come back to Jesus.

**What does Paul tell the church to do? Read again 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 for the answer.**



**Church punishment succeeds when the punished member comes back to the church.**

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul says that the man who had sex with his stepmother should be removed from the church (1 Corinthians 5:2). Also, the man should be “punished” (1 Corinthians 5:3). Then Paul tells the church to “hand this man over to Satan” (1 Corinthians 5:5, NIV). Paul adds, “Do what the Bible says: ‘Send the bad person away from among yourselves’ ” (1 Corinthians 5:13, EASY). Paul tells the church members not to “be friends with people” who do sex sins (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, EASY). Paul warns, “Do not even agree to eat a meal with them” (1 Corinthians 5:11, EASY). Paul uses strong language that may upset modern readers. But we must remember that Paul is talking about someone who is not hiding his sin. So, Paul must use strong language to solve the problem. Let's look at some of what Paul says and explain what his words mean.

**“Send the bad person away”** (1 Corinthians 5:13, EASY; also read verse 2). This verse is talking about what punishment the church should give the man.

**“Give this man to Satan”** (1 Corinthians 5:5, ICB). This man didn't live in obedience to God's law. The man chose not to be under God's protection. So, the man put himself under Satan's control.

**“You must not be friends with people”** who are doing sex sins (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, EASY). **“Do not even agree to eat a meal with them”** (1 Corinthians 5:11, EASY). When we are close friends with people who do sex sins, we may want to copy their sins. So, we need to protect ourselves as best we can from the evil around us.

**“Then God may save the man's spirit”** (1 Corinthians 5:5, EASY). Church punishment is meant to help sinners give up their sins and come back to God. Church punishment succeeds when the punished member comes back to the church.

**PROTECTING THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 5:3, 12, 13)**

In 1 Corinthians 6:1–11, Paul continues to talk about how Christians should solve problems with other members in the church.

**Read 1 Corinthians 5:3, 12, 13 and 1 Corinthians 6:1–13. What is Paul trying to teach the Corinthians and us?**

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In 1 Corinthians 6:1, Paul uses a word that is written as “complaint” in the WE Bible. “Complaint” comes from the word ‘pragma’ in the Greek language. In 1 Corinthians 6:1, Paul uses ‘pragma’ or complaint to talk about going to court. We must understand that 1 Corinthians 6:1–11 isn’t talking against criminal courts. The Bible respects the power of courts of law to punish criminals (Romans 13:1–5). Paul talks about a court of law right after he talks about sex sins. Moses did the same thing in Deuteronomy 22:22–24. So, we can see that Paul follows the Bible to solve problems in the church.

We don’t know for sure what the problem in court is about. The problem may be a sex sin. Whatever the “pragma” was, Paul was not happy to see church members taking other church members to court. The judges in these courts of the land were not Christians (1 Corinthians 6:1). As Christian brothers and sisters, why couldn’t the church members solve their problems on their own?

Maybe the church members who went to court are the father and son in 1 Corinthians 5:1. Again, we don’t know for sure. We don’t need to know that information to understand Paul’s teaching. Paul cared about the church and what people outside the church thought about it. Christians shouldn’t share problems in the church with the public (1 Corinthians 6:6). Christians shouldn’t use the courts to judge or solve problems inside the church. In the Kingdom of Rome, judges showed more favor in court to people who were important or rich. So, the church must not go to the courts to solve their problems. They must use the Bible.

**Think about Paul’s list of sins in 1 Corinthians 5:10, 11 and in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. Why does Paul include sex sins on the same list with worshiping statues, stealing, cheating, and being selfish?**



**The church must not go to the courts to solve their problems. They must use the Bible.**

## JESUS MAKES US FREE FROM SEX SINS (1 Thessalonians 4:1–8)

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8. What do these verses say about the connection between our living a holy life and not doing sex sins?**

In 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8, Paul teaches us an important rule about how to live as Christians. So, why were the Christians in the church at Corinth not following it?

Some church members in Corinth believed that the Good News about Jesus made them free. So, now they could do anything they wanted. They said that just as the stomach was made for food, the body was made for sex (1 Corinthians 6:13). Paul says that Jesus doesn't make us free **to** sin. He makes us free **from** sin. Sex sins should not be part of the Christian life (Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:13; Romans 6:18, 22). Paul tells us, "Our bodies belong to the Lord. So you should not use your bodies to have sex in a wrong way" (1 Corinthians 6:13, EASY). Who we are must control what we do. Both things are connected. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul shows us this important rule in three different ways.

First, Paul says God washed us from our sins. He made us clean and holy. Now God accepts us because of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:11). The list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 and the sex sins in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 cannot be part of the Christian's life.

Second, we are part of the "body" of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:15). The symbol of the body shows us that we must be united with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17). Sex sins break our relationship with God (1 Corinthians 6:13, 15). Whoever joins with a person in sex becomes one body with that person (1 Corinthians 6:16). So, Jesus must control our sex lives, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Third, our bodies are the same as temples where the Holy Spirit lives (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). If we want to live a holy life, we must have a close relationship with Jesus with the Spirit's help. Then we won't do sex sins. Paul tells us "to serve God with your whole life. Offer your bodies to him like [the same as] a sacrifice [offering] that continues to live" (Romans 12:1, EASY).

**Think about all the suffering that sex sins cause the human family. What should this thought tell us about why Christians must not sin against their bodies?**



**Paul says that Jesus doesn't make us free to sin. He makes us free from sin.**

**MARRIED OR SINGLE (1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9)**

Look again at Paul’s teaching that your body is the same as “a temple for the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19, ERV). Do you see that Paul teaches this idea while he is warning the church against sex sins? What is the only way we can live a holy life? (Read yesterday’s study.) Our bodies must become the same as a temple for the Holy Spirit to live in. The church must be different from the community around it. The Holy Spirit in our hearts makes that change possible.

**Read 1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9. How do these verses help us to follow the commandment not to do any “sex sins”? (1 Corinthians 6:18, NLV).**

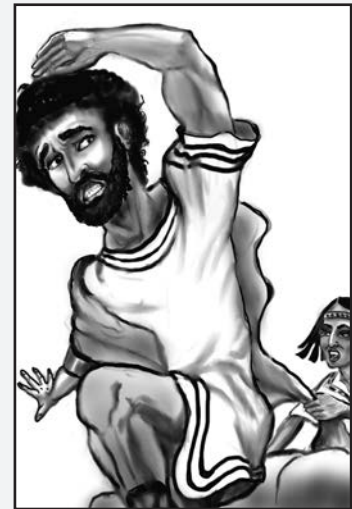
We can learn important Bible truth about sex in 1 Corinthians 7. This chapter can be divided into two parts: (1) lessons about marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1–24) and (2) lessons about being single (1 Corinthians 7:25–40). 1 Corinthians 7 helps us understand that these topics are important and necessary. So, we must talk about them.

But we must remember that Paul is answering questions about the problems in the church at Corinth. Then we will understand Paul’s ideas about marriage better. If not, we may think that Paul doesn’t respect marriage very much. But that is not true (read 1 Timothy 4:1–3; 1 Timothy 5:14; also Hebrews 13:4).

Also, we must remember that God made sex. But God made us to enjoy sex only in marriage. Sex is a gift. God made it for marriage between a male and a female. That is the only type of sex that the Bible accepts.

That’s why Paul warns us to “run away from every kind of wrong sex!” (1 Corinthians 6:18, WE). When Paul gives us this warning, he may be thinking about the story of Joseph (Genesis 39:6–18). Joseph ran away from Potiphar’s wife when she tried to have sex with him. The Bible tells us that Joseph “ran out of the house” (Genesis 39:18, EASY). The Bible doesn’t say so, but we can see from the story that Joseph waited to have sex only in marriage (Genesis 41:45). Joseph was filled with the Holy Spirit (Genesis 41:38). He wanted to do what was right in God’s eyes.

**How can we, as a church, protect ourselves from wrong ideas about sex that are in our communities worldwide?**



**Joseph ran away from Potiphar’s wife when she tried to have sex with him.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “A Message of Warning and Entreaty,” pages 298–308, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

In the list of sins in 1 Corinthians 5:10, 11 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, Paul talks about worshiping statues, getting drunk, and sex sins. As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:7 (compare with Exodus 32:1–6), idol-worshiping feasts were filled with people who ate and drank too much. These things caused people to do sex sins (1 Corinthians 10:8). Ellen G. White says:

“People who are selfish and eat too much can’t enjoy the blessing of a holy life. . . . God made the human body very strong. We can do terrible things to our health. But the body can continue to correct the suffering we cause it. After a while, our wrong habits will hurt our bodies. We will suffer if we continue to eat and drink too much or if we enjoy the wrong types of food and drink. Then we will have a hard time staying healthy. Our bad habits will cause our minds, bodies, and spirits to become weak.”—Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, pages 25, 26, adapted.

“Self must die. You must get rid of every false god from your heart. When your heart is empty, the Spirit of Jesus can fill your spirit completely. People who are filled with the Spirit of Jesus have faith that causes them to show God’s love to other people. This faith washes the heart clean from every sin.”—Ellen G. White, *The Home Missionary*, November 1893, adapted.

“God wants to change our hearts. He wants us to be clean and holy. That’s why He sends us His Spirit. His Spirit works in us at all times to help us change. . . . We have natural habits that need to be corrected. If the Spirit doesn’t correct these habits, they will destroy us.”—Ellen G. White, Manuscript 12, 1888, adapted.



**“We will suffer if we continue to eat and drink too much or if we enjoy the wrong types of food and drink.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 How do Paul’s questions about the body help us to understand his worries about the church? (Read 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Corinthians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19.) Why should we also care about these same problems today?
- 2 Today, many people outside the church think marriage is old-fashioned. How can we show them that marriage is really a gift from God that comes from Eden?

## FASHION FOR JESUS

A fashion show in New York City is about to start. Photographers get their cameras ready to take pictures. The models wait to walk down the runway. They wear the newest and most beautiful fashions.

The woman who runs the show is Isabelle. Isabelle is backstage. There, she prays with the models before she sends them down the runway in front of the crowds.

Isabelle knows many famous people who make clothes. She also knows many famous movie stars who wear them. But these things are not the reason for Isabelle's happiness. What gives her joy is the work for God that Bryant Park Life Hope Center is doing. This center is in the city. Here, Seventh-day Adventists are touching lives and teaching people about Jesus.

Isabelle grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was taught that we must win people to Jesus. Isabelle was a ballet dancer, a model, and even a skateboarder. Now she makes beautiful clothes for people to wear. Whatever Isabelle does in life, she does for Jesus. In the past, Isabelle got injured badly. Jesus healed Isabelle from her terrible pain. Now Isabelle wants to serve Jesus even more.

God healed Isabelle just before the Life Hope Center opened, in 2021. Isabelle says, "At that time so many miracles happened. I wanted everybody to know what God did for me. So, when Life Hope Center leaders asked for volunteers, I said Yes."

God gave Isabelle much success in the fashion business. She can meet people few Seventh-day Adventists can meet. She can go places where few of us get the chance to go. Isabelle uses her fashion shows to bring people close to Jesus in their hearts.

Isabelle's ads for her fashion shows share her love for Jesus. Isabelle explains, "In every collection of fashion I do, I always ask the audience to look into their hearts. I want them to think about their actions and behavior. I want them to ask, 'Is there a God out there? Should I change? Is there hope for me?'"

Isabelle adds, "After Fashion Week, the people who worked with me call me up on the phone just to hear my voice! They say my voice gives them peace. I know that's God, because I talk too fast to be peaceful!" Isabelle prays with her models, her workers, and anyone in the fashion business who is nervous or under pressure. Some people ask Isabelle what church she goes to. They say, "Wherever you go, I want to go." Then Isabelle brings them to Life Hope Center for a program or Bible studies. Or she takes them to a nearby Seventh-day Adventist church.

*Isabelle uses every part of her life to win people to Jesus. What if every follower of Jesus today did the same thing?*

## INSIDE *Story*

by SANDRA DOMBROWSKI



**Isabelle prays with her models, her workers, and anyone in the fashion business who is nervous or under pressure.**