

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Culture Collision: My Sex Life is My Business**  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20  
February 4, 2018

*Pastor Michael Novotny*

Hi, I'm Pastor Mike Novotny with Time of Grace. Have you ever heard the story about the elderly couple who invited the pastor to their home for dinner? After dessert was served, they gave him a tour of their place and they stopped by the kitchen and the basement and the yard and living room and then they went down the hallway where the bedrooms were. The elderly gentleman winked at his pastor, he pointed to the bedroom and said, "Pastor, that's the worship center." That's either a slightly inappropriate story or it's really wise because that old gentleman believed that God had something to do with his sex life; that God who created him also created sex. That the Father in heaven who loved him cared about what was good for his body, for his relationship, and for his soul.

So often in today's world, Christianity and culture collide when it comes to sex; the culture says one thing and the Bible says another. Today, Pastor Mark Jeske is going to take us into the middle of the collision. He's going to remind us of the clear things that God says in his word and, even more importantly, he's going to remind us of God's love and amazing grace for people who have struggled with sexual sin.

*Pastor Mark Jeske*

And so, the real mission of you and me and of the church – you and me as individuals and the church as an organization – is to connect people with Christ and let the Spirit begin to talk to them. Otherwise, you're speaking a different language, you're wasting your breath, and all we're going to look like as Christians is a bunch of legalistic Pharisees, hypocritically trying to put rules on other people that we don't even do such a hot job of keeping ourselves.

And that, unfortunately, is the way many of the nons – or the spiritual but not religious people – look at Christian people; as a bunch of blowhard hypocrites who are preaching a lot of stuff that they don't even practice themselves. And they just do not want your religious talk; don't put the rules of your cult on me. And it's not the rules of our cult; it is simply – as I said last week – Christianity is not a religion. It is not a philosophy. It is reality. It's like oxygen and gravity and water. They are simply describing the workings of the universe. And you can fight that and buck it and hate it or you can pay attention and see what good things God has placed there.

To kind of savor this – that was kind of a long build up to why this chapter of the Bible's so important – I can't think of a chunk of Scripture more powerful and impactful than 1 Corinthians 6. So get a Bible or get your tablet or smart device out and look it up and I want you to know how to find this and I want you to read this with me now. We're going to go through it so fast, it's almost like just a quick hors d'oeuvre-y kind of snack. But if you're serious about this and you are with me on this thing about acknowledging your being created by God and you really want to be an obedient child and you really do see the Bible as telling you healthy truth that you

need to be happy in your life, then you need to know where this is and you need to know what's in this chapter.

The chapter really has two big themes and it really – all of 1 Corinthians, if I could just have another little aside here – the entire book of 1 Corinthians is about the collision of Christianity with a largely secular and partly pagan culture in Corinth. Corinth was a big city; possibly the second largest city in the entire Roman Empire in the whole Mediterranean world. It was like Chicago; a crossroads. Chicago got big because it's where the Great Lakes meet all the food produced by the Midwest; so farm meets water – that's Chicago, Illinois. And it's at a pivot point around the lake; everything moving west to east and east to west has to go around Chicago. It's a natural trade access. It's where all the railroads all came together and all the roads all come together. Chicago is a giant spaghetti of connectivity and communication and that's what Corinth was in the eastern Mediterranean; major land routes connecting upper and lower Greece and the trade routes dealt with the water. The Greeks were great sailors so Corinth was a bustling port with everything you would come to expect in a city that caters to sailors. Think about it.

What do you – how could a person make money with sailors in town? Think about that for a little bit, will you? In fact, the pagan temple at the top of the Acrocorinth – what goddess do you suppose the Greeks worshipped who lived in Corinth? Who was their patron goddess? Aphrodite; the goddess of love and s-e-x. And you could go worship her there and basically rent one of the temple prostitutes and it's called a two-for; you can worship and party at the same time. What could be better than that? Obviously, they made a lot of money and a thousand women worked at the Acrocorinth in the temple of Aphrodite. That is the culture where this little fledgling congregation was trying to set down some roots. Naturally, they came slamming – what they would teach about family structure and human sexuality – slammed into the culture of Corinth at large. So Paul had to write to them to re-teach some things because it was unraveling. They were losing ground in the way that they were trying to live out their Christian faith. So the first two paragraphs we're going to skip today because they talk about the shameful example that was being given to the people in Corinth. Congregations are supposed to be a place where people love each other; where there's care for one another, where you're taking care of each other. And the reputation was this cranky little cult, people are suing each other. Their disputes – I'm embarrassed to even say this; makes me feel a little smug like we're better than them? Yeah, right? Their disputes within this little congregation were so severe, arguing over property of some kind, they were suing each other in public court. How embarrassing! Paul wrote to them: “Can't you find some wise man or woman within your congregation to navigate this and settle these disputes before it goes public? You're making Jesus look bad. Knock it off!” That's my summary of it; the “knock it off” isn't in the Bible but that's kind of what he says.

Wouldn't it be better to be wrong? Now, verse 9, this in some ways is the heads up; it's like the tornado siren in the middle of this chapter howling to wake up that there's a disaster looming: “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?” There's nothing but Judgment Day, the anger of God, and hell if you are unjust. Wicked – this word wicked, adikoi, means people who are not right with God. You must be right with God in order to pass on to his eternal kingdom. What you think is freedom now where you can live any way you want is

actually just clicking shackles on your legs, which will drag you down into hell. This is a wakeup call.

“Don’t be deceived.” Now he gives what you might call the “terrible ten;” ten lifestyles that if lived in without repentance – it’s not that sinning drives you into hell; it’s the lack of repentance. If this is so unrepentantly part of your life that it becomes your lifestyle, you are doomed! This is a death sentence; these are people who are committing spiritual suicide. Now listen up; here are the ten: “The sexually immoral.” It used to be called fornicating; people who have sexual relations with other people they’re not married to, number one.

Number two: “Idolaters.” Finding something you’re obsessed with more important than God and there are many different things to make idols out of. “Adulterers.” This is an advance on the first word of sexually immoral. “Moichoi,” in Greek means that you’re doing this and you’re breaking a marriage, too; like you’re – you are having an affair with a married woman or a woman having an affair with a married man. So you’re not only breaking God’s sexual limitations but you are also breaking a marriage.

Here are two words – depending on which Bible translation you use – there are two words referring to male homosexuality. Male – my older version of the NIV says, “Male prostitutes,” not a good translation at all. The word malakoi means more passive males in a homosexual relationship. And the other one, the other word, arsenokoitai, means men who have sex with men, meaning the more aggressor; like the receiver and the giver, if you would. So both habits, or lifestyles, are condemned in this word.

“Nor thieves,” people who take things from other people, who steal and break the seventh commandment. “Nor the greedy.” So ninth and tenth commandments talking about coveting – even your desires, if you are materialistic and your heart is corrupted and rotted out with a lust to acquire things – that’s a disease that makes you ill and guilty before God. “Nor drunkards.” If you take God’s beautiful gift of wine and turn it into an addiction or lose your self-control and destroy your wealth, your home and your job. “Slanderers,” breaking the eighth commandment, who use words to destroy other people’s business and reputations.

“Swindlers,” are stealers who don’t take stuff directly but they figure out financial scams of a way to siphon off other people’s money is evil. None of these ten, these are – and this isn’t a master list – these are ten examples of sin of people accountable to God that if not repented of and changed, become spiritual suicide where you will be judged “guilty” and where you will end up in everlasting damnation. This is a big deal.

But, he said, “That’s what some of you were,” and I love that past tense. And he said, “Some of you were,” and I frankly suspect that this list of ten describes many of the men and women and possibly some of the children within the sound of my voice right now; this is talking about you too, and me. “That’s what some of you were.” The gospel changes people’s hearts. The gospel changes people’s lives. “That’s what some of you were.” The word of God changes us. He says, “Some of you,” meaning that some of you are still unpersuaded yet and I get some of you probably are, as well. You’re working your way through these issues, too. Not everybody is

functioning at a high level; some of us are still pretty broken and we're still somewhat caught up in one of these ten – or maybe numbers eleven through twenty – you're caught up in.

But here's the best part: "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." What the Lord had done is invade your life to change your thinking. First of all, to recognize the disconnect between how you're living and God's holy standards. Instead of saying, "What of it? I've got the freedom to live any way I want." To say, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner," and accept responsibility for our breakdowns. To say, "I'm sorry," to get those words past our teeth: "It is my fault." Boy, that's hard. Can you get those words easily past your teeth? Man, it's hard for me. I don't like admitting I'm wrong but that's what repentance is; to say, "Lord, I have insulted you and disregarded you. I have ignored you, blown you off, and pushed you away and I'm sorry about that. I'm going to do better – I want to do better." And because we were washed in our baptism, because we were sanctified meaning the spirit of the Lord comes and lives within us, and because we're justified, that is how the adikoi, the unjust, the wicked, become righteous in God's sight. It doesn't get based on your performance; it is based on the washing, cleansing blood of Jesus. Which not only takes away the guilt of the staggering pile of sins in your past – which it does! – but it also plants a new heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone inside your ribcage. And instead of saying, "I can live any way I want; it's my life," now our message to God is, "My way was a pretty dumb and stupid and self-destructive way. I belong to you now. What have you got for me? What wisdom have you got for me, Lord? What guidance do you have for me? What is your way, oh Lord? Speak, Lord, for your servant finally is listening." That's what some of you were. The gospel works.

Here are three examples that people were throwing at Paul; quoting him. He had talked about your freedom in Christ – freedom from the old dietary rules, the kosher rules – "Hey, we heard you say everything is permissible for me." But Paul says, "Hey, but not everything's beneficial." Don't abuse your freedom. "Everything is permissible for me but I will not be mastered by anything." So God gave us – he created wine. In fact, Christ brought it into Holy Communion as one of the elements of communicating himself to people but not everything's beneficial. It's not good to have a cocktail party at your house when you've got people who are alcoholics there and you're putting them in severe temptation. Help your friends who are alcoholics and help them to stay clean. Don't put them in situations where they're socially pressured to do something that will be harmful to them. "Everything's permissible but I will not be mastered by anything." God gives you the ability to pick up or set down a drink and you have to use your judgment. But if you realize or other people tell you you have lost your self-control and now alcohol is your master, you've got to give it up for you must be clearheaded in your life. Alcohol must not be your master. You must master it or else put it down and walk away from it. Even though you might think, "Well, I have the freedom." It's not freedom anymore if you're being mastered by it.

Now here's another line they threw at him: "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, God's going to destroy it all." In other words – that's all in quotes by the way – or it should be in editorial quotes. They're like saying, "Hey, what does it matter? The human body is just an old piece of – it's just my taxi for my soul to ride around in and it's falling apart, it's going to die, and it will get buried, so it's a corrupt dying thing. The only thing that matters is my spirit

and soul; what I do with my body is utterly irrelevant. I can eat like a glutton and I can sleep around like James Bond and it's all fun if I'm having fun.

Wrong! Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong. You were saved – not only did Christ Jesus save your soul, he saved your body, too. Your body is a treasure. Your body is not only for this life, it's for the next life, too. Your body was saved by Jesus Christ. Listen to this: “The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead and he will raise us also.” Our bodies, too. So our bodies are not just an old slowly weakening, sagging, fat, old, disease-ridden, bag of bones that we're going to soon ditch and fly free. Your body is part of your eternal package. Don't abuse it; honor it and respect it. It's also been grafted onto Christ. Your body is now part of the body of Jesus Christ himself and that's what makes Holy Communion such an incredible reminder we're bonded with him physically.

“Shall I – do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I take the member of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Don't you know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?” And there's a reminder of the two becoming one flesh. “He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.”

“Therefore,” verse 18, here's our drumroll for you and me as Christians, “flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside of his or her body. But whoever sins sexually, sins against his or her own body. Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who's in you?” You are walking churches. Washed by the blood of Jesus, designed by God the Father, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That makes you a personal representative of God himself wherever you go. So not only is your own happiness at life at stake, not only the way you live is going to invite God's blessings or call down his curses, but you are walking advertisements of the faith you claim and say with your lips. “You are temples of the Holy Spirit who's in you, whom you have received from God. You are not your own.”

So that's why it's hard for Christians to have this discussion with non-believers. How can you say to somebody who's not even a Christian, “You are not your own.” They're going to say, “Don't be ridiculous; of course I'm my own.” So save the talk about trying to straighten out people's behaviors; that's the fruit of their faith. But without faith, you can't have the discussion. Concentrate your talk on sharing what an awesome thing it is to have a Savior named Jesus who lifts off of us the crippling burden of our guilt and now who in love lays out for us a better way to live. But don't start with the human behaviors; you can never clean anybody up. The only way that you seem to get any progress with that is making rules and pressure and nagging. But as any of you know who've lived a while, pressure and nagging, rules, do not work if the heart is unconvinced. Talk to people about their Savior. Let the word of God speak and it will either do it or it won't. And when people have come to have a relationship with God to the point where they say, “Lord, I want you to speak to me. How shall I live?” And they come to the point where they see in the Bible healthy life-giving spiritual food, then you can become somebody's guide and say, “Let's dig in and see how God blesses your life. What kind of life is a blessed and a happy life?” And then you can come and talk about personal self-control in one's sexual life.

“You are not your own.” Why? “You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.” And let me encourage you – for this is a message not only for others but it’s a message you and I must transmit to our children. If you have middle school aged kids or teenagers, we join with you in trying to help them have a high view of their body and to be respectful of other people’s bodies, which are also – at least in the case of believers – temples of the Holy Spirit. To show physical respect to other people and not give in to our lusts and desires and show and be respectful of the bodies of other people. To put energy into marriage. As I said before, we have lost our respect and love for marriage in significant measure in our country. Let us put our energy, reinvesting into God’s amazing invention and design, and live happily.

Now this is not to put down single parents; people find themselves in all kinds of situations not of their choosing or design. We have – want to send out only love, appreciation, respect to every parent who’s got to struggle on all by himself or all by herself. But, because there are so many single parents – does not mean we now redefine normal and marriage now becomes simply optional for child-raising. God’s original design still is a mamma and a papa in a home. And our sociologists groan and complain that so many young people today growing up in the city do not have mentors; they need mentors. Well, what they really need is a father because fathers are mentor number one to every young man, aren’t they?

So here is God’s way. America and the world have maybe thought they were coming up with better ways to live and express their sexuality. I’m here to tell you those ways are suicidal; they lead only to destruction. These are words of health and life. And I implore you to believe them yourself. To model them for your friends. To repent of your own foolish sins and claim the wonderful forgiveness of Jesus and say, “Starting today, these will be my thoughts. This is what I shall do.” And to do whatever you can to pass on these healthy ideas about our bodies to your children and their children.

This is a big deal. Amen.

***Pastor Michael Novotny***

We have a lot of interesting people who come to my church and they often come with interesting tattoos. But I think I saw one of my favorites the other. A young man came into church and I saw just on the base of his neck the words that Pastor Jeske just shared with us from 1 Corinthians 6, just that little snippet, "And that is what some of you were."

When we hear the words that Pastor Jeske just shared with us, that we should not be deceived, drunks and gossips and adulterers and the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God, we might panic. That's what I am, that's what I do, Pastor. That's what I struggle with. But the way that passage ends, the way that tattoos reads, it's such beautiful good news, isn't it? That is what some of you were. That's your past identity. That's before Jesus and you. Because of Jesus and God's grace, God doesn't define us by what we do. He says who we are is in Christ because we've been washed by Jesus, because the Holy Spirit has given us faith, because all of our sins have been forgiven, including all the sins on that list. A sinner is not what we are in the eyes of God; that's what we were. Now you're a child of God. Now you're loved, now you're holy, now you've been defined by grace.

As we think about ourselves, our sexuality, our family members, our friends, and our country, would you please join me and pray?

Dear Father in Heaven, I thank you so much for creating the gift of family and the gift of sex. It was your idea, God, and we want to celebrate it for everything that it is. Help all those of us, God, who live in such a backwards culture to remember that sex is not a bad thing. Sex is a good thing because a good God made it. We pray, God, for all those who are sexually struggling; for those who are turning to false idols and false ideas, would you enlighten them with your truth? And would you help us as your church not to be too judgmental, not to be so quick to criticize those who are outside of your family. Let us be known, God, for standing up for your word but even more for standing up for love.

Thank you, Jesus, for your incredible grace. Thank you that our sins, even our sexual ones, have been separated from us as far as the east is from the west. Thank you that we can be pure and washed and beautiful in your sight. You are not ashamed of us, you are not embarrassed of us. You died so that we can be perfect in your eyes. We thank you for that kind of grace. We thank you for your love and we ask it all, Jesus, in your beautiful name. Amen.

For Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mike Novotny and it all starts now.



TIME OF GRACE®

# Gracenotes

guides for personal Bible study

## *Culture Collision: My Sex Life Is My Business*

1 Corinthians 6:12-20: <sup>12</sup>“ ‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’—but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup>You say, ‘Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.’ The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ <sup>17</sup>But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. <sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Can you remember a time when society reinforced the belief that sex outside of marriage was committing adultery? How has that changed in society today?
2. What makes having a discussion about human sexuality with someone who doesn't share your belief in God and his Word so difficult? Can you understand why that someone might feel that their sex life is not your business?
3. But as God's redeemed child, your sex life is his business. Read 1 Corinthians 6:12,13. Does God care if society thinks that anything goes sexually? Who does your body belong to according to verse 15?

4. **Read 1 Corinthians 6:18.** What are we to do in regards to sexual immorality? And why would we do that?
  
5. By keeping sex inside marriage and by honoring and working on your marriage together with God and your spouse, what are you showing to the world and to the next generation about what God says?

As God's redeemed children, we were bought back from sin and death by Jesus. That makes our bodies God's temples—not our own. Just because society says all things are permissible doesn't mean that God agrees. He's given us his plan for sexuality and marriage, and we honor him and bring him glory when we live our lives according to his will.

### *What else does God say?*

**Romans 12:1:** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

**1 Corinthians 10:31:** Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.