

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, July 18 – Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-6. In chapter 5, Paul explained what to do with open immorality in the congregation. In chapter 6, he teaches how the congregation should handle smaller problems among believers. Society has set up a legal system where disagreements can be resolved in courts. But Paul declares that disagreeing Christians should not have to go to secular court to resolve their differences. As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit and the mind of Christ, so why should we turn to those who lack God's wisdom? Because of all that we have been given as believers, and because of the authority that we will have in the future to judge the world and the angels, we should be able to deal with disputes among ourselves. The saints are believers. See John 5:22 and Revelation 3:21 for more on judging the world.

Tuesday, July 19 – Read 1 Corinthians 6:6-11. Why did Paul say that Christians should not take their disagreements to unbelievers in secular courts? (1) If the judge and jury are not Christians, they are not likely to be sensitive to Christian values. (2) The basis for going to court is often revenge; this should never be a Christian's motive. (3) Lawsuits make the church look bad, causing unbelievers to focus on its problems rather than its purpose.

In verses 9-10, Paul is describing characteristics of unbelievers. He doesn't mean those listed are automatically and irrevocably excluded from heaven. Christians come out of all kinds of different backgrounds, including these. They may still struggle with evil desires, but they should not continue in these practices. In 6:11, Paul clearly states that even those who sin in these ways can have their lives changed by Christ. However, those who say that they are Christians but persist in these practices with no sign of remorse will not inherit the kingdom of God. Such people need to reevaluate their lives to see if they truly believe in Christ.

Wednesday, July 20 – Read 1 Corinthians 6:12. Apparently the church has been quoting and misapplying the words "everything is permissible for me." Some Christians in Corinth were excusing their sins by saying that (1) Christ had taken away all sin, and so they had complete freedom to live as they pleased, or (2) what they were doing was not strictly forbidden by Scripture. Paul answered both these excuses. (1) While Christ has taken away our sin, this does not give us freedom to go on doing what we know is wrong. The New Testament specifically forbids many sins that were originally prohibited in the Old Testament. (2) Some actions are not sinful in themselves, but they are not appropriate because they can control our lives and lead us away from God. (3) Some actions may hurt others. Anything we do that hurts rather than helps others is not right.

Thursday, July 21 – Read 1 Corinthians 6:13. Sexual immorality is a temptation that is always before us. In movies, on television, sex outside marriage is treated as a normal, even desirable, part of life, while marriage is often shown as confining and joyless. We can even be looked down on by others if we are suspected of being pure. But God does not forbid sexual sin just to be difficult. He knows its power to destroy us physically and spiritually. No one should underestimate the power of sexual immorality. It has devastated countless lives and destroyed families, churches, communities and even nations. God wants to protect us from damaging ourselves and others, and so he offers to fill us – our loneliness, our desires –with himself.

Friday, July 22 – Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. Christians are free to be all that can be for God, but they are not free from God. God created sex to be a beautiful and essential ingredient of marriage, but sexual sin - sex outside the marriage relationship – always hurts someone. It hurts God because it shows we prefer following our own desires instead of the leading of the Holy Spirit. It hurts others because it violates the commitment so necessary for relationship. It often brings disease to our bodies. And it deeply affects our personalities, which respond in anguish when we harm ourselves physically and spiritually. What did Paul mean when he said our bodies belong to God? Many people say they have the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies. Although they think that this is freedom, they are really enslaved to their own desires. When we become Christians, the Holy Spirit fills and lives in us. Therefore, we no longer own our bodies. “Bought at a price” refers to slaves purchased at an auction. Christ’s death freed us from sin, but also obligated us to his service. If you live in a building owned by someone else, you try not to violate the building’s rules. Because your body belongs to God, you must not violate his standards for living.