Growing in Grace, Growing in Community -- Life Lessons on Maturity with the Corinthians

***Passion, Purity, and Purpose --*** 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

 What is it to be human? Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.” The first thing God says about us is that we are His, the second, that we exist as His image-bearers, and the third, that each of us is either male or female. It is as male and female that we are stewards of creation, and can “be fruitful and multiply.” Our sexuality, then, is not social construct, but creation order, not a burden, but a blessing, not a choice, but a destiny. No wonder that some of our greatest temptations come in this area, from Satan, society, and our own sin nature. Paul does not use the “Just say ‘No!’” approach, but as explains that our passion and purity are tied to God’s purposes for us: We are His possession, called to His holiness, and graced with His presence.

❖ You are God’s creation. vv. 12-14

When we live as children of our Father, we will not use our bodies indiscriminately for our own pleasure, but for His intended purposes in creating us, spirit AND body.

❖ You are one with the Son. vv. 15-17

When we live as joined to Christ in purity, we will not join our bodies with others in sin.

❖ You are God’s dwelling place. vv. 18-20

When we live as the Spirit’s Temple, we will live for His glory, and not allow trespassers.

**Growth Principle #8: The spiritually mature Christian rejects immorality**

**by pursuing God’s purposes for purity in both spirit and body.**

***1. Paul’s reasons are positive, not negative.***

Purity is a positive quality rather than merely the result of NO! Our culture even now is acting out the folly of promiscuity, and the failure of negative motives such as avoiding disease, shame, and unwanted pregnancy. These are good reasons and results of purity, but fail to provide the holy, heart oriented motives God gives. Even if we manage to avoid negatives, we are not made righteous by things we don’t do. Our lives need not be ruled by “shalt not.” To refuse one thing is to embrace another.

***2. Creation Order counters the assumptions of today’s culture of sexuality.***

 Our culture regularly makes three mistakes about sexual expression: Trivialization (sex is no big deal), Darwinization (it’s only natural, a biological function), and Privatization (it’s my business). But under- standing God’s purposes for creating us male and female shows us that sexual expression carries eternal consequences, is God’s gift, and involves the whole person indeed, all of society and civilization.

***3. God desires our desires to be prioritized and intentional.***

 We speak, write, and hear about our passions being out of control. “I couldn’t help myself.” “It overpowered me.” “I was caught up in the moment.” As powerful as our passions may be, they do not, and must not own us, otherwise they will ruin us. We should remember: first, God calls us to eternal joy, not fleeting pleasure. That is, sexual expression, however wonderful it may be in its place, is not the ultimate thing it is held out to be. The presence and fellowship of God is the ultimate satisfaction. When we pursue pleasure for its own sake, we risk missing eternal joy. Second, the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Gal. 5:23). When God calls us to holiness, He provides a way. We must, however, cooperate, and seek it, and not keep putting ourselves in the way of temptation. 1 Corinthians 10.



***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. This is a difficult topic to discuss. Why do you think that is the case? Where are the limits?

2. Why are abstinence and even virginity today often spoken of with contempt? What are the prevailing winds in our culture about our passionate side? That is, how do the arts, for example, portray passion?

3. How does viewing yourself as God’s creation differ from viewing yourself as a random result of Darwinian “blind chance”?