

The Future of Your Body *Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*

God is the Primary Owner of Your Body *1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20*

Introduction: Views on Bodies

Our culture often assumes that your body is yours and yours alone. When you get up in the morning, and then you go look in the mirror, *it looks like* you are the one who feeds your body, washes your body, and lives in your body. So shouldn't you be the one who decides to paint your body, tattoo your body, or pierce your body? Shouldn't you be the one who decides to get liposuction on your body, inject plastic into your body, put hair on and take hair off your body? Shouldn't you be the one who decides when to have sex, and who to have sex with? Isn't it because it's your body? Shouldn't you be the one who decides when to have a baby, and whether to have an abortion? Isn't it because it's your body? Isn't the mantra of the pro-choice position, 'My body, my choice?' As long as we are talking about mature adults who are in their right mind, isn't it obvious and self-evident that your body is yours alone?

When we think about it, though, our bodies are clearly NOT just our own. I want to show how people in secular culture and secular thought actually acknowledge that. Let me give you the following scenarios and ask what you think about them:

1. A married couple regularly gets into a fight. She tells him to exercise more. He tells her to take more calcium. They say, 'Why are you telling me what to do with my body?'
2. A wife who feels uncomfortable that her husband watches pornography and masturbates to it. He says, 'Look, it's my body.'
3. One day, a 55 year old immigrant woman who cleans other people's houses, is sexually harassed. One of her employers, an older man, fondles her breast. The woman comes home and tells her son, a 25 year old young man. Feeling angry and protective over his mom's body, he decides to confront this older man.
4. A 9th grade boy is told by some high school friends, both boys and girls, that they saw his mom in a porn movie. She apparently filmed it when she was in her 20's. Chiding him, they ask whether he wants to come over to watch it with them. Flushed with deep confusion, anger at his mom, and resentment at his friends who chide him for it, he goes home and challenges his mom about the discovery. Angered, she goes into her room, slams the door, and refuses to talk about it.
5. Two young women have unwanted pregnancies. One gives birth to her baby and throws the baby into the dorm room toilet. The other has a late term abortion at 7.5 months.
6. Two couples with newborns are handed a short booklet about how infants need loving, physical touch for their brains and body to develop well. (Touch helps develop the brain's emotional wiring, increases the baby's heart and lung strength, and helps the baby's digestion.) One couple reads it; they make concrete changes to how they care for their baby. The other couple throws it away and does nothing differently; they are definitely less affectionate towards their baby than the first couple.
7. You go from the U.S. to another country on a vacation. In a crowded restaurant, you ask a couple sitting next to you if they would put out their cigarettes because you're affected by the smoke. They look at you in disbelief. They say, 'Smoking is legal here. Why don't you Americans stop telling the rest of the world what to do?'
8. A 22 year old young man is about to graduate from college. He is killed by a random shooter. His hard working parents are 55 and 60 years old and were hoping to afford their retirement with help from their son.
9. The U.S. government imposes a military draft, telling young men and women what to do with their bodies.
10. A veteran of the Iraq War returns home with a leg missing. One war protester points at him and says, 'I don't want my tax dollars going to support him!'

The scenarios we just talked about show how we today acknowledge that your body is not just *your* body. (1) The first scenario: *A married couple regularly gets into a fight. She tells him to exercise more. He tells her to take more calcium. They say, 'Why are you telling me what to do with my body?'* This has some reality. My wife and I are tied to each other's bodies. She tells me to exercise, and I tell her to make sure she's getting enough calcium. Why? What gives us the right to tell each other what to do with our personal bodies? The fact that we'll have to

care for each other when we get older. It really matters to her that I stay healthy, especially since her dad had a heart attack just a couple of years before we were married. It really matters to me that she gets enough calcium because women are at risk for osteoporosis. Because we are going to care for each other, she has a say in what I do with my body, and I have a say in what she does with hers.

(2) Second, let me take that up a notch. *A wife who feels uncomfortable that her husband watches pornography and masturbates to it. He says, 'Look, it's my body.'* Imagine a woman who catches her husband watching pornography. She feels betrayed. But why? Isn't that just him using his own eyes? Do his eyes belong to her? If we're going on the superficial assumptions of our culture, then the answer is no. She doesn't own his eyes so her feelings are invalid and there is nothing she can say. And yet something about that doesn't quite feel right, does it? What if he masturbates to pictures of other women, is there something wrong with that? Isn't his penis his own? Does it somehow belong to her? Or take it a step further. What's wrong exactly with Tiger Woods cheating on Elin Nordgren? Or Jesse James cheating on Sandra Bullock? Tiger's body is his body, isn't it? Jesse's body is his body, isn't it? As long as they're not catching some disease? But something about that doesn't quite feel right, does it? There is a sense in which a husband's eyes, a husband's penis, and even his mind actually belong in a secondary sense to his wife. Marriage creates a bond where their bodies belong to each other in an appropriate way. Something in us tells us that. But how can we explain that?

(3) *One day, a 55 year old immigrant woman who cleans other people's houses, is sexually harassed. One of her employers, an older man, fondles her breast. The woman comes home and tells her son, a 25 year old young man. Feeling angry and protective over his mom's body, he decides to confront this older man.* This is based on reality. When my mom, who does domestic work cleaning rich people's condominiums, told me that one of the older men she worked for grabbed her breast, I was incensed. If I was living in Los Angeles near my mom, I would have gone to have a few choice words with that old pervert. Clearly, there is something about my mom's body that I take responsibility for, which I defend. It is *her* body, yes, no question, and yet *I* am tied to her body, too. I feel the same way about the bodies of my sister, my wife, my daughter, and my female friends. Why do men take responsibility for the bodies of the women in their lives? I'm willing to bet that every man has felt that way. But why? How do we explain that?

(4) Consider the deep relational and emotional complications of having a mom who starred in a sex tape or in a pornographic film. Is it true that it was just the woman's choice, and it doesn't matter what the repercussions are for her son? Now that images and videos can live forever on the internet, does this affect her children? And maybe her grandchildren? Does she owe them something? An explanation? Regret? Not doing it in the first place?

(5) Fifth, consider abortion, that hot button issue. *Two young women have unwanted pregnancies. One gives birth to her baby and throws the baby into the dorm room toilet. The other has a late term abortion at 7.5 months.* Some people, and perhaps you think this way, believe that abortion should be okay under any circumstances, during any part of the pregnancy. The rationale is, 'My body, my choice.' But do you think it's wrong for a woman to flush her newborn baby down the toilet? You probably do think it's wrong. Incidentally, according to one estimate, 30,000 babies are abandoned every year in the U.S. But if it's wrong to kill a newborn baby, then is it wrong to kill that baby 1 week before it's born? What difference does 1 week make exactly? What difference does it make whether that baby is inside or outside the mother's womb? I understand that these questions are hard to answer, but that's why I raise them. Perhaps there are legitimate circumstances to get an abortion, but I don't think it's as simple as saying, 'My body, my choice.'

(6) And then there the responsibilities parents owe their children with their bodies. *Two couples with newborns are handed a short booklet about how infants need loving, physical touch for their brains and body to develop well. (Touch helps develop the brain's emotional wiring, increases the baby's heart and lung strength, and helps the baby's digestion.) One couple reads it; they make concrete changes to how they care for their baby. The other couple throws it away and does nothing differently; they are definitely less affectionate towards their baby than the first couple.* There's something wrong with that second couple. Children need touch and love in order to develop. It's fairly well known now that breast feeding has more benefits to the baby than bottle, that affection helps brains and bodies develop. It's funny that in the Bay Area, in liberal Berkeley, one blogger said that people come out and tell other people what to do. You should get a better children's bike helmet. You shouldn't mess with the animals. You shouldn't litter. (*In Bay Area, Free Speech Means Scolding Strangers*, by Michelle Quinn, <http://bayarea.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/03/the-societal-police-take-on-insect-displays/>)

(7) You go from the U.S. to another country on a vacation. In a crowded restaurant, you ask a couple sitting next to you if they would put out their cigarettes because you're affected by the smoke. They look at you in disbelief. They say, 'Smoking is legal here. Why don't you Americans stop telling the rest of the world what to do?' Well, that's certainly a culture clash, isn't it?

(8) Eighth, consider the connections in families. *A 22 year old young man is about to graduate from college. He is killed by a random shooter. His hard working parents are 55 and 60 years old and were hoping to afford their retirement with help from their son.* That child was obviously the parents' beloved child. But let's also say that that child was their retirement plan. They scrimped and saved all their lives for that child to make it through school, have those opportunities, go to college, and get a respectable job. That child was about to enter the working world and help his parents. The person who fired that bullet has robbed them. The son's body was not just his own. And what about friendships? If that person was a friend of yours, you are also robbed. Perhaps not as deeply as his parents, but you are robbed nonetheless. We miss their smiles and hugs. Our friends hold our hand and hold us up. We are invested in their bodies.

(9) Ninth, consider the military draft. *The U.S. government imposes a military draft, telling young men and women what to do with their bodies.* The government can call up able-bodied men and women into the armed services through the draft. The government can tell you to kill and die – to do things with your body that you probably would not do otherwise. A few people would say no to the draft, but some would say yes for the right cause. But, in any case, when those same men and women come back with a limb missing, or their nerves shattered from post-traumatic stress, do we have an obligation to their bodies? Do we have a responsibility to care for them? I think we would all say yes to that. We are invested in their bodies, because they risked their bodies for us.

(10) *A veteran of the Iraq War returns home with a leg missing. One war protester points at him and says, 'I don't want my tax dollars going to support him!'* I think most of us would say that the veteran's body exerts a claim on our bodies. When veterans come back with shattered nerves or broken bodies, we feel a claim on our bodies. Because of their sacrifice, even if we disagreed with the Iraq War, we make a sacrifice: in paying taxes to support their recovery.

So how is it possible to keep saying that you are the only owner of your body when in reality, we don't live like that at all? When we think about loving others, when we think about our duty to them, when we think about our commitments to people, when we think about our most important relationships, we are not the only people who have a claim to our own bodies. Other people do, too. That is clear. So how are we to make sense of all this?

Relevance

At the very least, it should lead us to question American culture and how we talk about our bodies. That sets the stage for the much deeper Christian claim. It's not that loving Jesus and following him takes us in the other direction to the point that your body really doesn't belong to you. There is an entirely different paradigm. Are you ready for this? Because this is going to challenge our culture like almost nothing else, but it will also explain at a swift stroke all the ways that we sense that we are interconnected. Here it is: We are not actually the primary owner of our bodies. God is the primary owner of *all our bodies*. You are the secondary owner of your body. You have been *entrusted* with your body to share it with God. God has a vision for how we all use our bodies. That vision is for our bodies to house *Him*.

Context: Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Now the Scripture we're going to be looking at is Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Part of the reason is because in the Greek city-state of Corinth, more than in most other places, people were devaluing their own bodies and other people's bodies. They were doing inappropriate things with their bodies. Paul's response to this was to talk about Jesus' body, his resurrection body. Since God gave Jesus a fresh, new resurrected body, He will also give us a fresh, new resurrected body. God made our bodies. And He will renew our bodies into a new state. The things we do in our bodies now have an impact on our destinies. We need to understand that. That's why our bodies totally matter. That's why I'm calling this book and this series *The Future of Your Body*.

We are now starting the second major essay of this letter. The first essay was about the future of our corporate body. Jesus Christ is God's true humanity. So the body of Christ, corporately, is God's true humanity. And that's

why we really want to be a part of it. More precisely, part of *him*. We are now on the second essay, which is about sex and the body and the body. Our body individually, our body corporately. And once again, Paul's point is that because Jesus was raised into new life bodily, we will be raised into new life bodily. That has implications for how we view our bodies.

Paul teaches us here how to think in a Christian way. Everything about our bodies and how we use our bodies is connected to the resurrection body of Jesus. Everything. If you can prove that Jesus never rose from the dead, that the disciples moved his body, and that his flesh decomposed in some other grave, then our bodies really don't matter, so we can do whatever we want with your bodies because our bodies have no future with God. But if Jesus did rise bodily from the grave, then God has a plan for human bodies. Jesus' resurrection body answers all the questions about the future of our bodies and all the questions related to how we use our bodies in the present. This is what it means to think, speak, and live *consistently* as a Christian.

God Dwells in You: v.19

So Paul comes to the climax of his argument in 6:19: ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

The radical Christian idea is that God desires to live in your individual body by his Spirit, and our corporate body by his Spirit. Imagine having a guest come over to your house, except that he's the true owner and the maker! He says, 'Excuse me, would you mind helping me clean all this up? It's not as clean, warm, and welcoming as it could be to others.' He often says, 'Let's rearrange the furniture in here, shall we? As in, let's rearrange the priorities inside your heart.' And he may be gentle in how he goes about this. Or he may be firm, persistent, and tough. But let's be clear: He never apologizes to you for any inconvenience that may cause. It is God's absolute right to do that.

To support that claim, Paul brings up three reasons. First, our bodies were meant to be the places where God dwells. There is a pun here in v.19, because the 'your' is plural but the 'body' is singular. It's fairly clear that he means it both ways. For now, I'm going to focus on our individual bodies. God created us. He created us. He gave us our bodies. He had a purpose for our bodies. Our physical bodies are the places where God wants to show His character and shines His glory to the world.

Illus: What would it be like if you made a video of yourself to serve as an image of you, and then that video somehow took on a life of its own? What if the image of you in the video suddenly started acting all ridiculous, hogging all the food, pushing people around, dominating the camera and making fun of everyone else? How would you feel about that image of yourself? You'd be irate!

Well, God is in the same situation. He created us to be images of Himself. So the highest purpose of our bodies is not pleasure, even though pleasure has a place and God wants us to experience it *the way He intended it*. There is a larger purpose for our bodies. If we just put our own selfish pleasures first, then we are not showing the character of God, which is loving and giving; we're showing contempt for the purpose behind our creation, and the One who created us.

How can God live in us? By making us a temple of His Holy Spirit: 'your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God.' Who is this Spirit? In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God is portrayed as the breath of God, taking the life of God and infusing that life into others. In the New Testament, which is more missional and more confrontational with other forces out there in the world, the Spirit is distinguished from every other spirit, because there are other spirits out there in the world, so the Spirit of God is called the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean for the Spirit of God to be called *holy*? What makes the Spirit so holy? Well it's not because the Spirit is so *distant* from us, as if *holy* meant *distant*, because the Spirit does exactly the opposite: He comes into us. Fundamentally, it's because God is so radically loving, and other-centered. The Spirit is holy because he shapes us to be as radically loving and other-centered as God. So when the Spirit convicts us to give up jealousy, it's because God Himself never experiences covetousness and lust, or being jealous of someone else. Especially within God, the Father loves the Son and desires to give all things to the Son, and the Son desires to give all praise and all things back to the Father, so there is no *being jealous of* within God. Or, when the Spirit convicts us to give up sexual sin, it's because God Himself never uses people for their benefits. God only ever wants to be in eternal loving union, no casual hookups. Especially within God, the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, and the love

between the Father and the Son is so intense and personal and eternal that the love is a person, the person of the Spirit. So when the Spirit of God comes into us, the Spirit helps us love God. The Spirit is passionate about making us more and more like God: loving and other-centered. The Spirit helps us to experience God giving Himself to us, and the Spirit helps us give ourselves back to God. God is different from everything else in the universe (*holy*) for many reasons, but most deeply, it's because no one else in the universe loves like God.

In fact, this is what God has been patiently working towards for all human history. When Paul says that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, he is thinking of the Jewish story of God dwelling among His people Israel in the temple that once stood in Jerusalem. And during that time, God was acting like a dialysis machine. He took the impurity of His people, and He gave back purity. The Israelites laid their hands on animals. They symbolically placed their corruption on the animal, and sent it into God. God consumed it within Himself. But as He did that, He gave back the uncorrupted blood of the animals. It was like new life. Symbolically, God was acting like a dialysis machine. As He waited for His people Israel to be committed enough to Him, that's what He did.

Christ Paid the Price for You: v.20a

But now, God is our organ donor. And that came at a huge price, a price paid by Jesus. In v.20, Paul says: ²⁰For you have been bought with a price. The price that Jesus paid was the price of entering into human flesh itself, and having to struggle against the corruption in our human nature. He did that throughout his entire human life until at last, at his death, he defeated it. That's why, in his resurrection, Jesus came back to us as a new human being, cleansed of sin, and perfectly united with God in his whole being.

Illus: This photo is Dr. Evan O'Neill Kane (April 6, 1861 – April 1, 1932) operating on himself at the age of 60. He is removing his own appendix. He did this on February 15, 1921. The reports I've read do not indicate that his appendix had ruptured. He didn't need to remove it. He just wanted to remove it. Why? Dr. Kane believed that general anesthesia, which was always used in this procedure before, was more dangerous than local anesthesia. He was treating other patients who had health conditions that made general anesthesia problematic. In this case, the general anesthesia was ether. Some patients could not be treated that way. But before Dr. Kane could prove that local anesthesia worked on his patients, he decided to be his own patient. In a sense, he loved his patients enough that he decided to become one of them. He wanted to experience surgery from the patient's perspective. Dr. Kane performed the operation with mirrors to enable him to see the work area. At this time, the appendix operation was much more major than today. Today, we use a modern keyhole surgery technique. Back then, the incision was much larger. Happily, Dr. Kane was well enough to be taken home the following day. ("Dr. Kane Recovering", *New York Times*, February 17, 1921, p.6) Now Dr. Kane performed many surgeries on people after that using local anesthesia. Of course, those were acts of love and service to other people. And yet, the surgery he performed on himself was the starting point, the source. It was the decisive moment, the focal point, and the source from which Dr. Kane performed every other surgery. He took all the risk on himself first. He took the greatest risk on himself first. Every other surgery was an aspect of that surgery, a hint of it, a shadow of the surgery he had already performed on himself.

The reason I share that story is because it helps us understand the price Jesus paid out of his love for us. When God stepped out of heaven and into Mary's womb, God became both patient and surgeon. He performed a type of surgery on himself for almost 40 years to change his own human nature. His surgical cuts in himself rooted out the human selfishness, our resistance to the Father, and every desire that was never meant to be in the human heart. But he had to go beyond removing one organ because his whole being was infected. He took on this disease that he struggled against his whole life. And he was successful where everyone else failed. He never sinned. He never gave in. So he bent human nature back to love the Father, and perfected the antibodies in himself. When he gave himself back to us, our maker became our healer. Our creator became our savior by recreating us. He did it first in the body of Jesus, and he does it now in our bodies by his Spirit.

Illus: There a story called the story of Bobby and his bought back boat. Young Bobby lived near a stream, and he made a little model boat. For days he worked on this wooden model, putting the pieces together, then painting it, then putting the sails on it. Finally it was ready to take out to the water. He tied a string to it, set it on the water, and watched it sail out to the full length of the string. But as the current took it, the string snagged on some branches, and cut the string. Bobby ran along the bank, but he couldn't keep up with the current. As the stream joined the river, the little boat was lost. Bobby never gave up looking for his boat. For days and weeks, he would walk along the river to see if the water had washed it up on shore. But there was no sign of it. One day he passed a store that

sold used clothes and books and other second hand things. In the window he saw his boat. So he went into the store and told the store keeper that he wanted to buy that boat. When he walked out of the store with his boat in his arms, he said, 'First I made you. Then I paid for you.' That is exactly what God says. 'First I made you. Then I paid for you. And now, I dwell in you.'

That is why Paul says at the end of v.20, 'therefore glorify God in your body.' The word 'glorify' means 'to reveal.' We are to reveal God in our bodies individually and in our body corporately. We are to be like God.

Illus: Let me give an example of how Christians are doing that. The following quote comes from an article on the website Slate. It is written by an atheist named Brian Palmer, and is called in *Medicine We Trust: Should we worry that so many of the doctors treating Ebola in Africa are missionaries?* He expresses discomfort with that fact, yet he says: 'Like it or not, though, we are deeply reliant on missionary doctors and nurses. The 2008 ARHAP report found that in some sub-Saharan African countries 30 percent of health care facilities are run by religious entities... As an atheist, I try to make choices based on evidence and reason. So until we're finally ready to invest heavily in secular medicine for Africa, I suggest we stand aside and let God do His work.' What an acknowledgement. That is awesome. Those people who are native West African nationals working alongside people from outside their own countries together are revealing God – His love, His life – through their bodies. Jesus perfected this radical, other-centered, self-giving love. His new humanity is saturated with it. And when we trust him to provide us with that love by his Spirit, he does. So when we are with that person who annoys us, we are to glorify God in our bodies. Reveal God. When we face the temptation to be selfish and disobey Christ, we are to glorify God in our bodies. Reveal God.

When it comes to the body, this is radical stuff and it challenges everyone. Conservatives and liberals alike will not like this teaching. Conservatives have a difficult time caring about the bodies of the poor. Let's face it; although many give to charity, most of those charities are their kids' private schools, theaters, universities, and many other causes. Some are causes I like, but most of those causes are not the poor. Many do not want to dismantle their privilege, which in most cases in Scripture is called *theft*. They call it personal freedom in economics. On the other hand, liberals tend not to care about sexual ethics for the body. Let's face it; many of them believe they can do almost anything with their bodies in the name of personal freedom in morality. They don't like the idea that God says that he made their bodies and has a purpose for their bodies.

God is the primary owner of our bodies. We are junior partners. He is the master. We are the apprentices, learning how to live in these bodies that God made for us. He made us to be junior partners with Him in the formation of our human nature and the perfection of our bodies. **HOW DARE WE CLAIM TO BE THE BOSS. HOW DARE WE CLAIM TO MAKE GOD A CONSULTANT, AS IF HE JUST HAD SOME GOOD ADVICE HERE AND THERE. NO, GOD SAYS, 'FIRST I MADE YOU. THEN I PAID FOR YOU. NOW, I WANT TO LIVE IN YOU AND THROUGH YOU.** That is how to think as a Christian, speak as a Christian, and live as a Christian. That is the vision. That is the goal. Let us repent for all the ways we have distorted that truth.