

5 | Sanctified



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Are you familiar with the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*? My children are because my wife and I often read the book to them. In the story, the caterpillar had a hunger that could never be satisfied. But one day everything changed. He no longer crawled on the ground nor did he feel that intense hunger. Instead, he was fulfilled and had wings with which to fly. Then the author revealed that he was never created to remain a caterpillar; he was designed to be a beautiful butterfly.

I felt empathy for this caterpillar and maybe you do too. Like this caterpillar, we were never designed to remain hungry and unfulfilled. Instead, we were designed to live in a relationship with God through the sacrifice of Christ. We were designed to live set apart from the ways of a sinful world; we are set aside to become something greater.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul sought to help us understand the process of being set apart from the rest of the world. That is what it means to be sanctified.

GROUP TIME

THE POINT: We are set apart in _____ to live holy lives.

God is holy. He is set apart, separate, and unique from His creation. But God isn't the only one who is holy; as His children, we too are to be holy and set apart from the world around us. To be holy is to be sanctified, and the Christian life is a life of growing in sanctification.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ⁹ Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, ¹⁰ no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. ¹¹ And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

We're set apart from our _____ of life.

The beauty of being sanctified and set apart in Christ is that we're no longer enslaved to sin as we once were. When we're in Christ, the Father sees us as righteous; we're no longer counted as unrighteous. Paul listed some specific sins and reminded the Corinthians, "Some of you used to be like this" (v. 11). It was a humbling reminder that they were justified not by their actions, but because of Christ's death and resurrection.

Paul was also sending a warning that their lives should no longer look like their old way of living. We're sanctified and set apart from the old way of life. We will only find death in sin, but we find life in Christ. When we come to Christ, everything changes!

1 Corinthians 6:12-17 ¹² "Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me," but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will do away with both of them. However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not! ¹⁶ Don't you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, The two will become one flesh. ¹⁷ But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

We're set apart to be _____ with Christ.

Paul had been reminding the Corinthians that they were sanctified in Christ. Paul encouraged them not to engage in the old life, because some of their old sins were exactly what they were chasing. We're set free in Christ, but the Corinthians were misinterpreting that freedom. Paul quoted one of their slogans twice—"Everything is permissible for me"—but both times he gave a truth that went against that slogan: "not everything is beneficial" and "I will not be mastered by anything" (v. 12).

Earlier, Paul had written to the churches in Galatia: "For freedom, Christ set us free" (Galatians 5:1). What did He set us free from? Slavery to sin. We're free *not* to sin, but some in the Corinthian church wrongly took that freedom to mean they were free *to* sin.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 ¹⁸ **Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.** ¹⁹ **Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,** ²⁰ **for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.**

We're set apart to _____ God.

In verses 12-17, Paul stressed that what we do physically—in this case, sexual sin—does matter. So now he offered a course correction: "Flee sexual immorality!" (v. 18). Flee means to run away, not just walk away, from a situation; don't take time to think about getting away. Get as far away as possible—and do it immediately! In fleeing from temptation, it's essential to consider what we run *to*. We can't flee aimlessly from sin, but must run ferociously toward Christ. Paul instructed Timothy, "But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11). We're to pursue the sanctified life.

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Use the space below to sketch a human body. (A stick figure will work fine.)
What are some ways we can glorify God with the different parts of our bodies?

ENGAGE

LIVE IT OUT

We were never designed to remain caterpillars. God set us apart for something far greater.

► **Offer thanks.** Reflect on how your life has changed because of Christ. Thank Him for setting you free from the former way of life. Ask the Lord to continue His good work.

► **Memorize.** Memorize 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and repeat it to yourself when you need to flee from temptation. “Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.”

► **Walk alongside others.** Making the daily choice to live a holy life is much easier when you walk alongside other believers. Surround yourself with others who also choose to live their lives for Christ. Your Bible study group is a good place to start.

TALK IT OUT

Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.

“Holiness” is a word people associate primarily with God or things they deem highly religious. Yet holiness—the idea of being set apart—is a life to which all Christians are called. In our culture of self-improvement, many Christians fall into the trap of thinking that being holy—sanctified—is just another do-it-yourself effort. While we play a part in our sanctification, it’s a work God does in our lives as we follow Him.

How do the words “washed,” “justified,” and “sanctified” describe your past, your present, and your future?

What does it mean to be “one spirit” with Christ?

What is our role, Christ’s role, and the Holy Spirit’s role in our sanctification?

DAY 1: Jesus takes away our sin and makes us righteous.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

When we come to faith in Christ, He makes us new. Paul used three key words to describe Christ's work in us:

- ▶ **Washed.** We're washed clean of our sin through faith in Christ. "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).
- ▶ **Sanctified.** We're set apart by God and declared holy. "By this will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time" (Hebrews 10:10).
- ▶ **Justified.** We're considered righteous in the sight of God. The righteousness of Christ is attributed to us. "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

All this happens at the moment of salvation—the moment we believe and trust in Christ, the One who lived a perfect life, died a sinner's death to take away our sin, and rose again to give us new life. Justification is a one-time event, but sanctification is a daily process. Our sanctification begins at the moment we're justified, but it continues throughout our lives as we grow more and more like Christ.

Praise God for the sins you've been able to claim victory over as He has sanctified you over time. Ask for His help to conquer any sinful habits you continue to repeat.

*"I have a great need for Christ; I have
a great Christ for my need."*

CHARLES SPURGEON

DAY 2: As Christians, we're to honor Christ in all we do.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-14.

Some in the Corinthian church were abusing the gift of sex and engaging in sexual immorality. Paul referenced a statement that the Corinthian believers were likely using in rationalizing their immorality: “‘Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food,’ and God will do away with both of them” (v. 13). Eating food is a natural part of life and something to be enjoyed, and they viewed sexual pleasure in the same way. They believed both food and sex were simply intended for their physical bodies and therefore had no bearing on their spiritual lives.

The belief that what we do physically has no bearing on our spiritual lives came from a heresy called Gnosticism. Gnosticism was popular in the first century, and its adherents made many attempts to influence Christian thinking and theology. One aspect of this heresy was the idea that the only thing that mattered was the spiritual. Physical matter wasn't important, which meant a person could do anything physically because it had no impact on his spiritual life. Paul spoke against this view. “However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (v. 13). We can't separate body and spirit. Our physical bodies belong just as much to Christ as our spirits do.

Commit to honor God in the area of sexual purity. Identify any obstacles that might derail you from this commitment and ask God to remove them.

DAY 3: As Christians, we're joined to Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-17.

Believers are one with Christ, and marriage is a picture of the oneness we share with Christ as his church (Ephesians 5:22-32). When we become believers, we're joined with the Lord through the Holy Spirit. “Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body?” (1 Corinthians 6:15). Consequently, the actions of our body affect our whole being.

This truth underscores just how set apart we are from the world. We're not one with the world and its way of thinking; we're one with Christ. And since His Holy Spirit lives within us, our actions should reflect that. Each of our bodies “is a temple of the Holy Spirit” (v. 19). Returning to the analogy of marriage, we recognize the weighty responsibility of living united to a spouse, but a deep joy also accompanies that commitment. It's the same in our relationship with Christ. We're joined to Christ and set apart for His purposes.

Have coffee with a mature Christian friend. Ask him or her to share what he or she learned about living “set apart” from the world and united with Christ.

DAY 4: The Holy Spirit empowers us to flee immorality and pursue the things of God.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-19.

God is glorified when we pursue the things of God and live sanctified lives. First Peter 2:9 declares: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” He called us out of our sin to belong to Him and be His own people. He set us apart—and we are not our own. Consequently, all our choices should bring glory to God. He chose us for a royal priesthood and called us out of darkness; we should willingly and joyfully proclaim His honor and glory.

Fleeing sexual immorality and faithfully pursuing righteousness may seem like a challenge, but it’s not insurmountable. We never face temptations alone (1 Corinthians 10:13). Because we trust and belong to Christ, His Holy Spirit is always right there with us. “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God” (6:19).

Summarize 1 Peter 2:9 in the space below in your own words. Thank God for calling you His own and bringing you out of the darkness sin creates.



DAY 5: Our daily submission to Christ brings glory to God.**Read 1 Corinthians 6:20.**

We value and take better care of things when we pay a lot of money for them. We typically give a lot of thought to what we purchase when it's costly. Many of us spend weeks, even months, selecting a home and securing a way to buy it. On the other hand, we buy a snack at the convenience store without much thought. On an infinitely greater scale, God chose to purchase you and me and it cost Him greatly—the death of His Son. Let's remember the price God paid to redeem us and bring us to Himself. We're wise to take special care of what belongs to God, which includes our whole spirit, soul, and body. "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

In submitting to Christ, we submit in both body and spirit. We're set apart—sanctified—in Christ, and our bodies are no longer to be used as vessels for sin. Instead, our bodies are to be vessels to glorify Christ. When we submit to Christ on a daily basis, and let His Holy Spirit fill us, we're well on the road of sanctification. A sanctified life lived for Christ can do nothing but glorify Him!

What area of life do you still need to submit to Christ? Do that today. Rely on God's strength and guidance as you seek to bring glory to Him.

"Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price."

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20A