



Study Guide: 1 Corinthians – Chapter 6

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This study guide provides an educational overview of 1 Corinthians Chapter 6 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 6 addresses critical issues related to disputes among believers, moral conduct, and the believer's identity in Christ. This chapter contributes to the broader flow of the epistle by confronting practical problems within the Corinthian church, particularly lawsuits among Christians and sexual immorality. Readers should watch for Paul's emphasis on the believer's new status as one united with Christ and the implications this has for personal holiness and community integrity.

Context

The immediate literary context of 1 Corinthians 6 follows Paul's earlier instructions on divisions and spiritual gifts, moving now to address specific behaviors that threaten the unity and witness of the church in Corinth. Historically, the Corinthian church was situated in a cosmopolitan city known for its moral laxity and diverse religious practices. Paul writes as an apostle concerned with guiding a young, struggling church toward maturity. The key speaker is Paul himself, writing from a pastoral perspective to correct and instruct the believers. The chapter reflects the covenantal reality of the new creation in Christ, where believers are called to live distinctively in holiness as God's redeemed people.

Outline

The chapter can be divided into three main movements. First, Paul addresses the issue of lawsuits among believers, urging them to resolve disputes within the church rather than in secular courts. Second, he confronts the problem of sexual immorality, highlighting the body's sanctity and its union with Christ. Third, Paul concludes with a theological explanation of the believer's identity as one bought by Christ and called to honor God with their bodies. Each section builds on the previous, moving from practical advice to profound theological reflection.



Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: Paul rebukes believers who take their disputes before secular courts rather than resolving them within the church community. He challenges their wisdom and reminds them that the saints will one day judge the world and even angels, implying they should be competent to judge minor matters among themselves.

Verses 4–6: Paul expresses astonishment that believers would bring lawsuits against one another before unbelievers, which harms the church’s witness. He encourages them to accept personal loss rather than damage the unity and testimony of the body of Christ.

Verses 7–8: Paul points out that believers wrong one another by taking disputes to court, which is inconsistent with their calling. He urges them to be wronged or defrauded rather than harm the community through public legal battles.

Verses 9–11: Paul lists various sinful behaviors, including sexual immorality, idolatry, and greed, warning that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. However, he immediately offers hope by reminding the Corinthians that some of them were once like this but have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit.

Verses 12–13: Paul addresses the issue of Christian liberty, affirming that while all things may be permissible, not all things are beneficial or constructive. He emphasizes that the body is not meant for immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Verses 14–17: Paul explains the profound union between believers and Christ through the Spirit. Just as God raised Christ from the dead, He will also raise believers. The believer’s body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and there is a deep spiritual union with Christ that calls for honoring God with one’s body.

Verses 18–20: Paul exhorts believers to flee sexual immorality, emphasizing that sin against the body is a sin against God’s temple. He reminds them that they were bought at a price—the precious blood of Christ—and therefore must glorify God in their bodies and spirits.

Key Themes

One key theme is the call to internal church discipline and wisdom, urging believers to handle disputes within the community rather than seeking secular judgment. Another



theme is the sanctity of the believer's body as a temple of the Holy Spirit, which demands holiness and purity. The chapter also highlights the transformative power of Christ's redemption, showing that past sins are forgiven and believers are called to live in newness of life. Finally, the theme of Christian liberty is nuanced by the responsibility to avoid behaviors that harm oneself or the community.

Cross-References

Matthew 5:25–26 clarifies Jesus' teaching on reconciliation and avoiding lawsuits, reinforcing Paul's call to settle disputes within the community. Romans 12:18 echoes the call for peace and living at peace with all, including believers. Ephesians 5:3–5 expands on the call to purity and the avoidance of sexual immorality as fitting for God's holy people. 2 Corinthians 5:17 highlights the new creation identity that undergirds the call to holiness in 1 Corinthians 6. Lastly, Hebrews 10:22 reminds believers of their access to God with a pure heart, encouraging the sanctity Paul advocates.

Application

Modern disciples can apply this chapter by prioritizing reconciliation and conflict resolution within the church rather than resorting to secular courts, preserving the unity and witness of the body. The teaching on the body as a temple challenges believers to pursue holiness in all aspects of life, especially regarding sexual ethics. Understanding that believers are bought with a price encourages gratitude and a lifestyle that honors God. Additionally, the balance between Christian liberty and responsibility invites believers to evaluate their choices based on what builds up the community and honors God rather than mere permissiveness.

Summary

1 Corinthians 6 confronts the Corinthian church with practical and theological challenges related to disputes and moral conduct. Paul urges believers to resolve conflicts internally and live in holiness, grounded in their identity as redeemed temples of the Holy Spirit. The chapter weaves together community responsibility, personal purity, and the transformative power of Christ's redemption, calling believers to honor God with their bodies and relationships. This passage remains a vital guide for maintaining church unity and personal sanctity in the life of the believer.