

1 Corinthians

Sex and Courts

Interpreting the Text:

1. In chapter 6, Paul seems to be clarifying a refrain of the Corinthian church: “all things are lawful for me.” He appears to be providing clarity and new conditions to address immorality in the community. Based on what you know of Paul’s mission, and what he writes in chapters 5 and 6, what might he have tried to teach previously to this church? What evidence do we have in the text of prior instruction?
2. Paul makes it very clear that the man who was considered to be sexually immoral in chapter 5 (and any other who make this offense) should be ostracized from the community. Is this consistent or in conflict with other teachings of Paul? Of Jesus?

Applying the Text:

1. Are there grounds on which you would want to exclude a member of your congregation? If so, what would they be? What are the challenges and implications given 2,000 years of history and growth in both the Christian church and society?
2. What do you make of Paul’s insistence on the relevance of the “body” for the moral and spiritual life? In what ways does modern society challenge or support that claim today?
3. Professor Bartlett claims that, in our modern day, “litigation has taken the place of theology.” What do you think Paul would say about our current approach to conflict management, both in our churches and in society? Do you agree with Professor Bartlett’s statement?