

**CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS
6:12-18**

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Declaration

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I, Oluge Martin, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work. It has not been plagiarized and has never been submitted to any other institution for the award of any degree or qualification.

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Approval

Approval

This is to certify that the research titled "*Christian Sexual Ethics: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18*" has been carried out under my supervision and is hereby approved for submission in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Divinity degree at Uganda Christian University.

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Abstract

Sexual immorality remains a serious and persistent challenge in the Church of Uganda, undermining its moral authority and public witness. Despite Uganda's overwhelming Christian majority with approximately 85 percent of the population identifying as Christian (UBOS, 2014), the country records one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in East Africa (UBOS & ICF International, 2018), alongside documented cases of moral failure even among church leaders. Yet empirical studies demonstrate that the Church's moral influence on sexual behaviour is both real and significant, though it depends heavily on the theological depth and pastoral quality of its teaching. It is this need that the present study seeks to address through an exegetical investigation of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18.

Employing a qualitative, library-based, historical-grammatical method, the study examines the Greek text within its historical, literary, and theological context before drawing pastoral conclusions for the Ugandan church. It is guided by two questions: what are the key theological principles regarding the body and sexual ethics in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, and what practical strategies can promote sexual holiness in the Church of Uganda?

The exegetical analysis identifies four theological principles in Paul's argument: a resurrection-grounded theology of the body; a reframing of Christian freedom as communal service and Spirit-empowered self-mastery; the one-flesh theology of sexual union grounded in Genesis 2:24; and the urgent, continuing command to flee sexual immorality as an expression of union with Christ. Together these do not form a list of prohibitions but a compelling vision of Christian identity that renders sexual immorality theologically incompatible with belonging to Christ.

The study proposes four practical strategies for fostering sexual holiness: theologically grounded preaching; discipleship and catechesis that treat sexual ethics as central to Christian identity; theologically rich premarital ministry; and communal accountability structures that hold truth and grace together. The study concludes that Paul's word to the Corinthians remains a living and directly relevant word for the Church of Uganda today.

Chapter 1: General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians addresses one of the most pervasive and destructive issues confronting both the early church and the church today: sexual immorality. This research examines 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, a critical sub-unit within Paul's broader treatment of moral and ethical disorders (5:1-6:20). The passage represents Paul's most concentrated theological reflection on the relationship between Christian freedom, bodily integrity, and sexual ethics. In confronting the Corinthians' misuse of Christian liberty as justification for sexual immorality, Paul develops a robust theology of the body that establishes believers' spiritual union with Christ and the fundamental incompatibility of that union with sexual sin (Garland, 2003, p. 234).

First-century Corinth was a prosperous Roman colony occupying a strategic commercial position on the isthmus between northern and southern Greece. Its cosmopolitan, transient population created an environment in which sexual commerce was widespread and socially normalized (Murphy-O'Connor, 2002, p. 55). While the proverbial phrase "to Corinthianise" used in the ancient world as a byword for sexual misconduct referred strictly to the Old Greek Corinth of an earlier era rather than the Roman colony Paul addressed (Thiselton, 2000, p. 10; Winter, 2001, p. 87), the Roman Corinth of Paul's day was nonetheless characterized by a thriving sex trade, the normalization of prostitution, and a cultural framework in which sexual permissiveness was treated as socially acceptable. It was into this environment that Paul's letter arrived, challenging believers to embody a radically different sexual ethic grounded in the gospel.

That challenge has not grown smaller with time. Uganda is among the most Christianised nations in Africa, with approximately 85 percent of its population identifying as Christian (UBOS, 2014), and yet the country records one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in East Africa (UBOS & ICF International, 2018). The Church is not absent from Ugandan life; in many communities it is the most trusted institution people know. But presence alone is not enough. Agardh et al. (2011), in a landmark study of Ugandan university students, found that religious affiliation without active and theologically grounded instruction did not consistently prevent

premarital sexual activity. Murungi et al. (2022) found, on the other hand, that young people whose religious leaders actively preached against sexual immorality were 35.6 times more likely to adopt sexually protective behaviours than those who were not. The difference between those two findings is not the presence or absence of the Church. It is the depth and quality of what the Church teaches.

This is precisely why a careful exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 matters for the Church of Uganda today. Through historical, literary, and contextual analysis employing verse-by-verse examination of the Greek text alongside relevant biblical commentaries and academic resources, this study aims to discern both the passage's original meaning and its enduring implications for the Church of Uganda.

1.2 Background to the Study

Scholars have debated the precise nature of the sexual immorality Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 6. Some argue Paul confronts participation in temple prostitution, pointing to the religious context of Corinthian sexuality (Murphy-O'Connor, 2002, p. 54). Others suggest he addresses patronage of common prostitutes or sexual relations with household slaves (Winter, 2001, p. 89). Fee (1987, p. 252) argues the specific form matters less than Paul's comprehensive principle: any sexual relationship outside marriage violates the believer's union with Christ. Garland (2003, p. 237) concurs, noting that Paul's argument from Genesis 2:24 establishes that all sexual intercourse creates a one-flesh union, making any extramarital sex incompatible with belonging to Christ.

Paul's pastoral concern in 1 Corinthians 6 resonates with urgent force in the contemporary world. Mueller (2025) documents how the modern cultural environment bombards people with sexualised messaging through marketing, film, television, music, and social media, arguing that the influence of the sexual revolution has become so deeply embedded in everyday life that many people no longer question whether to believe or behave as the culture instructs. The parallel with the Corinthian situation is striking and deliberate: then as now, the surrounding culture actively normalizes sexual behaviour that contradicts the gospel, and the church must find the theological resources to lead its members toward a different way of living.

In Uganda specifically, empirical research confirms both the church's significant moral influence and the ongoing challenge of sexual immorality among its members. Uganda is among the most

Christianised nations in Africa, with approximately 85 percent of the population identifying as Christian (UBOS, 2014), yet the country records one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in East Africa (UBOS & ICF International, 2018). Research among Ugandan university students has found that religious practice is among the most significant determinants of sexual behaviour, with active religious engagement associated with lower rates of premarital sexual activity yet religious affiliation alone, without robust theological instruction, did not uniformly prevent sexual immorality (Agardh et al., 2011). Similarly, Murungi et al. (2022) found in Lira district, northern Uganda, that young people whose religious leaders actively preached against sexual immorality were dramatically more likely to practise sexual restraint than those who were not. Together, these findings point to a clear conclusion: the quality and theological depth of the church's teaching on sexuality matters greatly.

The Church of Uganda, like the early church, faces unique challenges in addressing sexual immorality exacerbated by growing social media influence, limited theological resources, and inadequate pastoral training. This is precisely why a thorough exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, followed by contextually sensitive pastoral application, is both timely and necessary.

1.3 Problem Statement

Sexual immorality continues to pose a significant and recurring challenge within the Church of Uganda, undermining its moral authority and public witness. The problem is not that Uganda lacks Christian presence. With over 85 percent of the population identifying as Christian (UBOS, 2014), the Church occupies a central place in national life. However, even with consistent biblical teaching on sexual purity, including Paul's emphatic command to "flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18), rising cases of moral failure involving church members and leaders point to a recurring and serious pattern of moral failure.

Uganda is documented as having one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in East Africa (UBOS & ICF International, 2018). Agardh et al. (2011) found that among students at Mbarara University of Science and Technology, 46 percent of males and 23 percent of females with sexual experience reported having had three or more sexual partners. The same study noted that religious affiliation alone, without active theological formation, did not consistently prevent premarital sexual activity. Choudhry et al. (2014) further documented that approximately 25

percent of Ugandan university students reported involvement in transactional sex. These findings reveal a significant contradiction. While many Ugandans identify with the Christian faith, there remains a measurable gap between profession and practice, suggesting that the Church's teaching on sexual morality has not always gone deep enough to shape actual behaviour.

The contemporary Church's responses to sexual immorality have largely aggravated the problem rather than resolved it, mainly because the Church has tended to react only after an individual has already fallen, rather than building the kind of theological and communal environment where sexual holiness can take root. Paul's response to the sexually compromised Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 is instructive because it is neither reactive nor punitive. It does not begin with a rule but with a vision; a vision of the body's resurrection destiny, of believers' union with Christ, and of the one-flesh reality of sexual intercourse established at creation. It is out of that vision that the command to flee sexual immorality gains its full force and meaning. This study seeks to bring that theological resource into serious engagement with the contemporary realities of the Church of Uganda.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To carry out an exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18.
2. To apply the message of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 in order to promote sexual purity within the Church of Uganda.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the key theological principles concerning sexual morality and the body as presented in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18?
2. What practical strategies can be recommended for fostering sexual holiness among Christians in the Church of Uganda?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study provides a deeper understanding of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 as a foundation for biblical sexual ethics, examining the Corinthian slogans, the theological meaning of bodily membership in Christ, the contrast between one-spirit union with Christ and one-flesh

sexual union, and Paul's command to flee immorality. By bridging exegetical analysis with practical application, it offers contextually relevant strategies for promoting sexual holiness within the Church of Uganda.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study was primarily library-based and employed a historical-grammatical analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18. It focused specifically on the issue of *πορνεία* (*porneia*) within its historical context, limiting the discussion to sexual immorality in heterosexual relationships as addressed in the passage. The findings and pastoral proposals arising from this research will be applied within the Ugandan ecclesiastical context.

1.8 Literature Review

The literature review explored five bodies of scholarship relevant to this study: the systematic theology of human sexuality and the body; empirical research on religion, sexual behaviour, and the African church; contemporary Christian perspectives on sexual ethics; documented cases of sexual immorality among Ugandan church leaders and ways these cases were handled; and pastoral and restorative frameworks for addressing sexual sin. By surveying what has already been written, this review identified the gaps that this study seeks to address, particularly the absence of contextually grounded, exegetically rooted strategies for the Church of Uganda.

1.8.1 Systematic Theology of Human Sexuality and the Body

May (2004) provides the most directly relevant scholarly contribution to this study's exegetical focus. In *The Body for the Lord: Sex and Identity in 1 Corinthians 5-7*, May argues that Paul's sexual ethics in 1 Corinthians 5-7 are fundamentally about Christian identity formation, the maintenance of a clear moral boundary between insider and outsider that defines what it means to belong to Christ. May's central finding is that 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 reveals that sexual sin is unique in its destruction of Christian identity, since any sexual participation outside of Christ creates a conflict with participation in Christ himself (May, 2004, p. 7). This insight shapes the exegetical analysis in Chapter 2 and the application strategy in Chapter 3, where sexual purity is presented not simply as a moral rule to follow, but as something deeply tied to Christian identity, and therefore central to pastoral care for the people.

Grenz (1997) develops a systematic theological framework for sexual ethics grounded in Christian anthropology and soteriology. His integration of the creation, fall, and redemption narratives provides a comprehensive theological foundation for understanding sexuality as a covenantal rather than merely biological reality. Grenz argues that the relational nature of human sexuality is rooted in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and finds its proper expression only within the covenant structure of marriage (Grenz, 1997, pp. 78–134).

Piper and Taylor (2005) present a comprehensive theological framework in *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*. Piper's central thesis that sexuality is designed to help believers know God in Christ more fully, and that knowing God more fully in turn guards and guides sexuality establishes a Christocentric approach that resonates closely with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6 that the body belongs to Christ (Piper & Taylor, 2005, pp. 23–84).

Ash (2016) offers a biblical theology of marriage and sexuality that emphasises God's purposes for human relationships as the proper framework for understanding sexual ethics. While primarily focused on marriage, Ash articulates theological foundations for sexual purity that inform both married and single believers. His central argument that marriage exists for God's glory rather than merely human fulfillment corrects the consumer-oriented view of sexuality that has penetrated contemporary church culture (Ash, 2016, pp. 45–89).

1.8.2 Religion, Sexual Behaviour, and the African Church

A significant body of empirical scholarship examines the relationship between religious practice, church teaching, and sexual behaviour across sub-Saharan Africa. Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012), in their comprehensive empirical study of religion and the AIDS epidemic across more than thirty sub-Saharan African countries, demonstrate that religious communities play a vital role in shaping sexual ethics and sexual behaviour in Africa. What this research makes clear is that religious affiliation alone is not enough, it is the quality and theological depth of the teaching that matters most. Churches that offered theologically grounded moral instructions tended to produce more lasting changes in sexual behaviour than those that relied on prohibition or social pressure alone (Trinitapoli & Weinreb, 2012, p. 89). This finding has direct implications for the Church of Uganda, suggesting that the theological depth of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, which this study seeks to retrieve is precisely what is needed, not merely stronger rules or firmer discipline.

Agardh, Tumwine, and Ostergren (2011) conducted a landmark study of 980 students at Mbarara University of Science and Technology, examining the impact of religious and socio-demographic factors on sexual behaviour. Their findings confirm that religious practice is among the most significant determinants of sexual behaviour among Ugandan university students, with active religious engagement associated with lower rates of risky sexual behaviour and a higher rate of abstinence (Agardh et al., 2011). However, the same study found that religious affiliation without active and robust instruction did not uniformly prevent premarital sexual activity, a finding that underlines the urgency of the kind of theologically grounded teaching this study promotes.

Murungi et al. (2022) studied the role of religious leaders in Lira district, northern Uganda, among 422 young people and 20 religious leader key informants. Their finding that young people whose religious leaders actively preached against sexual immorality were 35.6 times more likely to adopt protective behaviors than those who were not, provides empirical confirmation that pastoral proclamation makes a measurable difference (Murungi et al., 2022). It is clear from these there empirical studies that the Church of Uganda has real influence over its members sexual behaviour, however, that influence depends on the theological depth of its teaching.

1.8.3 Contemporary Christian Perspectives on Sexual Ethics

Mueller (2025) analyses the contemporary sexualised cultural environment, documenting how pervasive sexual messaging through media, marketing, and social platforms shapes narratives that prioritise personal pleasure and self-expression over God's design for sexuality. Mueller argues that "the seeds of the sexual revolution have grown to the point at which their roots go down deep into the soil of our lives, bearing fruit that has come to taste so familiar that we don't even question whether to believe or to behave as we are told" (Mueller, 2025). This analysis illuminates contemporary pressures that closely parallel the cultural permissiveness of ancient Corinth, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6 for addressing contemporary sexual ethics.

1.8.4 Documented Cases of Sexual Immorality Among Ugandan Church Leaders

Conger (2021) documents Archbishop Stanley Ntagali's suspension from all priestly functions following his confession of an extramarital affair with a married woman. This case highlights the gap between public moral stances and private moral struggles even among the most senior church

leadership, and raises important questions about the adequacy of existing accountability structures at the highest levels of the Church of Uganda. The church's response, suspension rather than permanent removal suggests an attempt at a restorative approach, though the theological grounds and specific process of that restoration remain undocumented in the public record (Conger, 2021).

Daily Monitor (2025) reports the dismissal of Watoto Church Youth Pastor Zane Solomon Mugabi following allegations of sexual immorality. The church publicly announced Mugabi's removal from ministry across all its campuses on 10 August 2025, while extending forgiveness and making clear he would not return to leadership. The church reaffirmed its zero-tolerance policy for moral breaches among leaders, emphasizing that leading in the house of God is both a privilege and a responsibility (Daily Monitor, 2025). This case demonstrates that even churches with clearly articulated accountability policies continue to face challenges with sexual immorality in leadership, and underscores the need for preventative theological formation as well as reactive discipline.

1.8.5 Sexual Restoration and Pastoral Care

Laaser (2004) integrates psychological understanding of sexual addiction with biblical restoration principles, recognising that sexual sin often involves compulsive patterns that require both spiritual and psychological intervention. His integrated approach offers valuable insights, though the clinical focus may not translate easily to typical African church contexts where professional Christian counselling resources are scarce (Laaser, 2004).

Harvest USA (2024) provides biblical frameworks explaining why sexual immorality is particularly destructive while offering hope for restoration. Their materials emphasize the preciousness of sexuality and the way sexual immorality destroys the picture of Christ's relationship with his church, a theological point directly grounded in the passage this study examines.

This review reveals a significant gap in the existing literature. While there is substantial scholarship on the theology of sexuality, empirical research on religion and sexual behaviour in Africa, and pastoral frameworks for addressing sexual sin, there is a notable absence of studies that bring these three bodies of literature into direct conversation with each other in the African church context, and that ground the pastoral and empirical concerns in a thorough exegetical

treatment of a specific biblical text. The existing theological literature is largely Western in its application, the empirical literature is largely sociological without theological depth. This study hopes to fill that gap by offering an exegetically grounded, contextually sensitive engagement with 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 that moves from careful biblical scholarship to concrete pastoral application for the Church of Uganda.

1.9 Research Methodology

This is a qualitative, library-based research study employing the historical-grammatical method as its primary approach to interpreting 1 Corinthians 6:12-18. The historical-grammatical method is the standard exegetical approach in evangelical biblical scholarship, attending closely to the original Greek text within its historical and cultural context before drawing theological and pastoral conclusions. As Tate (2008, p. 15) notes, “an integrated approach to biblical interpretation seeks to understand the text in its historical, literary, and theological context.” The study proceeded through three interconnected phases. First it established the historical and cultural context of the Corinthian church’s struggles with sexual purity, secondly it analyzed the literary structure of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 within the letter as a whole, and finally a detailed verse-by-verse exegesis utilizing Greek grammar and vocabulary was conducted, with subsequent synthesis of findings to articulate contemporary applications for the Church of Uganda in Chapter 3.

1.9.1 Historical-Cultural Interpretation

Duvall and Hays (2020, p. 205) emphasize that since God spoke his message in specific historical situations, interpreters must take the ancient historical-cultural situation seriously. Understanding what the text meant in its original context is an essential precondition for discerning what it means in our context today. Gorman (2009, pp. 95–96) adds that the interpreter’s goal is to discover the social network within which the writers and hearers of biblical texts communicated. This study analyzed how Corinth’s political history, geographical position, religious atmosphere, and social stratification shaped the environment in which sexual immorality flourished and how that environment pressed upon the early Christian converts.

1.9.2 Literary-Structural Analysis

Literary analysis examines how the biblical text communicates its message through form, structure, and language. Duvall and Hays (2020, p. 269) note that literary context relates both to

the genre a passage takes and to the words, sentences, and paragraphs that surround it. Gorman (2009, p. 97) warns that a text isolated from its contexts is a potentially dangerous weapon. This research provides a detailed literary analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, situating the passage within its immediate argumentative context (5:1-6:20), within the letter as a whole, and within the wider Pauline corpus.

1.9.3 Biblical-Theological Application

Tate (2008, p. 134) argues that exegesis involves not only historical understanding but the responsible application of biblical teaching to contemporary life. Gorman (2009, p. 183) adds that theological interpretation seeks to understand the biblical text as a guide for contemporary belief and behaviour within a community of faith. Chapter 3 of this study fulfills this phase, drawing on both the exegetical findings of Chapter 2 and the empirical literature on religion and sexual behaviour in Uganda to propose concrete pastoral applications for the Church of Uganda.

1.9.4 Data Collection Instruments

Primary sources included the Greek New Testament (Nestle-Aland 28th edition; UBS5), English Bible translations (ESV, NIV, NRSV, NASB), and relevant ancient historical and philosophical texts. Secondary sources included academic commentaries on 1 Corinthians, peer-reviewed articles, theological dictionaries and encyclopaedias, books on biblical hermeneutics and application, official demographic data (UBOS & ICF, 2018), and other online documents.

1.9.5 Data Analysis Process

The data analysis proceeded through three integrated steps. First, exegetical synthesis: combining historical, literary, and theological insights into a coherent interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 that does justice to both the Greek text and its cultural context. Second, theological reflection: identifying the timeless theological principles that Paul establishes concerning the body's resurrection destiny, union with Christ, the one-flesh reality of sexual union, and the call to flee sexual immortality that transcend their original first-century context. Third, pastoral application: on the basis of the exegetical and contextual analysis, proposing concrete and actionable strategies for preaching, discipleship, premarital ministry, and communal accountability structures that the Church of Uganda can implement to foster sexual purity among its members.

1.9.6 Limitations of the Study

First, this study is library-based, drawing on exegetical analysis of the passage and published empirical research rather than direct fieldwork within the Church of Uganda. While the empirical studies consulted are thorough in their analysis, they cannot fully capture the diversity of pastoral contexts across Church of Uganda's many dioceses, and cultural communities.

Second, the study has focused primarily on the prevention of sexual immorality and the formation of sexual holiness, giving less attention to the complex and pastorally urgent question of how the Church walks alongside those who have already fallen into sexual sin. This includes, for instance, the church leader who has moral failure, the young Christian girl who has been sexually exploited and now faces an unplanned pregnancy, and the married person whose marriage has been fractured by infidelity.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the study's biblical and contemporary context, established its research objectives and questions, and surveyed the relevant literature and methodology. It has demonstrated that the challenge of sexual immorality confronting the Church of Uganda today closely parallels the situation Paul addressed in Corinth, and that empirical research confirms the church's moral influence depends above all on the theological depth of its teaching. The literature review identified a significant gap: no existing study grounds pastoral and empirical concerns about sexual ethics in the Ugandan church within a thorough exegetical treatment of a specific biblical text. It is this gap that the present study addresses. Chapter 2 proceeds to the exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, Chapter 3 applies those findings to the Church of Uganda context, and Chapter 4 will present the study's conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Exegetical Analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on four interrelated tasks: establishing the historical and cultural context that shaped the Corinthian church's struggles with sexual purity; analyzing the literary structure of 1 Corinthians with particular attention to how 6:12-18 functions within Paul's overall argument; conducting detailed verse-by-verse exegesis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 utilizing Greek grammar and vocabulary; and synthesizing findings to articulate contemporary applications developed in Chapter 3.

2.2 The Historical and Cultural Context

Corinth's complex political history significantly shaped the environment in which sexual immorality flourished. Originally a prominent Greek city-state, Corinth was destroyed by Roman forces in 146 BCE and lay in ruins for a century before Julius Caesar ordered its reconstruction as a Roman colony in 44 BCE (Witherington, 1995, p. 2). The city's reconstruction fundamentally altered its demographic and moral character. Murphy-O'Connor (2002, p. 12) observes that the reconstituted city primarily attracted Roman freedmen, military veterans, and Mediterranean migrants rather than the original Greek inhabitants, creating a cosmopolitan environment characterized by moral fluidity and the absence of traditional restraints.

The city's strategic geographic position on the narrow isthmus connecting northern and southern Greece provided unparalleled commercial advantages. Controlling two major ports, Cenchreae to the east on the Saronic Gulf and Lechaem to the west on the Gulf of Corinth; Corinth functioned as a crucial Mediterranean trade hub (Hargreaves, 1991, p. 56). This positioning generated tremendous wealth but also facilitated the sex trade, as merchant sailors and traders passing through the city created constant demand for prostitution (Winter, 2001, p. 89). The concentration of wealth, a transient population, and commercial opportunism combined to normalise sexual commerce and moral compromise (Fee, 1987, p. 3).

Corinth's religious atmosphere was dominated by Greco-Roman polytheism, with the worship of Aphrodite occupying particular prominence. Earlier scholarly claims that the temple of Aphrodite employed one thousand sacred prostitutes must be treated with considerable scepticism. Murphy-O'Connor (2002, p. 56) argues directly that "sacred prostitution was never a Greek custom, and

were Corinth an exception, the silence of all other ancient authors becomes impossible to explain.” Winter (2001, pp. 87–88) similarly concludes that the claim is based on a misreading of Strabo’s Geography (8.6.20), which referred to Corinth’s distant past several centuries before Paul’s day and not to the Roman colony Paul addressed. By Paul’s time, the temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinth was a relatively modest structure, and the claim of one thousand cult prostitutes almost certainly does not reflect the religious environment of the New Testament church. What the scholarly evidence does confirm is that Corinth had a well-established culture of secular prostitution connected to its commercial activity and that the worship of Aphrodite carried significant sexual associations even if the formal institution of sacred prostitution is historically doubtful (Thiselton, 2000, p. 11; Garland, 2003, p. 9).

The association between religious devotion and sexual permissiveness nonetheless created a cultural framework in which sexual immorality was normalised and, in certain contexts, treated as socially acceptable. The phrase “to Corinthianise” became proverbial in the ancient world for sexual misconduct, reflecting the city’s notorious reputation (Murphy-O’Connor, 2002, p. 12). Whether or not formal sacred prostitution was practised in Paul’s day, the cultural legitimization of sexual immorality presented believers with the profound challenge of distinguishing their sexual ethics from culturally normative practices.

The social and economic stratification of Corinthian society further complicated sexual ethics. The city’s culture was shaped by sophistic rhetoric, competitive athletic games, the biennial Isthmian Games were second only to the Olympics, and pronounced class distinctions (Johnson, 2004, p. 78). Wealthy men routinely maintained sexual access to slaves, prostitutes, and concubines as markers of status and privilege (Winter, 2001, p. 92).

The Corinthian church reflected this economic diversity: while Paul notes that “not many” believers were “wise by human standards... influential... or of noble birth” (1 Cor. 1:26), indicating most came from lower social strata including slaves and freedmen, the congregation also included prominent individuals like Erastus, the city treasurer (Rom. 16:23), and Crispus, the former synagogue leader (Thiselton, 2000, p. 143). This social diversity meant that believers occupied different positions relative to sexual privilege and vulnerability. Wealthy Christians were accustomed to sexual access as a prerogative of status, while poorer believers particularly female

slaves and freed persons were often victims of sexual exploitation, they had limited power to resist (Garland, 2003, p. 235).

The Corinthian context thus presented unique obstacles to Christian sexual ethics. The cultural normalisation of prostitution, the religious associations of sexual permissiveness, the social privileges that granted wealthy men sexual access to multiple partners, and the cosmopolitan mixing of diverse moral traditions created an environment where maintaining biblical sexual standards required counter-cultural resistance.

2.3 Literary Analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18

1 Corinthians 6:12-18 serves as the theological climax of Paul's treatment of sexual immorality and is situated within the section addressing moral and ethical disorders (5:1-6:20). Thiselton (2000, p. 420) argues that this section reveals "fundamental challenges to Christian identity in the Corinthian cultural context," establishing principles for ethical behaviour that inform Paul's subsequent discussions of marriage, food offered to idols, and worship practices. The section divides into three interconnected units, each progressively developing Paul's theology of holiness and the body.

Unit A (5:1-13) addresses the shocking case of incest, where a believer was living with his father's wife "sexual immorality of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans" (5:1). Paul's outrage focuses not merely on the sin itself but on the church's proud tolerance of it (5:2, 6). He commands the community to "purge the evil person from among you" (5:13), invoking the language of Deuteronomy 17:7 to emphasize the necessity of maintaining moral boundaries (Fee, 1987, p. 199). The unit establishes that sexual immorality threatens the holiness of the entire community, using the metaphor of leaven to illustrate how sin spreads if left unaddressed (5:6-8). Paul grounds his call for discipline in Christ's sacrificial death as the Passover lamb (5:7), thereby linking sexual purity to redemption and establishing that believers must "celebrate the festival" with "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (5:8).

Unit B (6:1-11) addresses lawsuits among believers, confronting the scandal of Christians bringing disputes before unbelieving judges rather than resolving conflicts within the church (6:1-6). While seemingly a shift in topic, this unit continues Paul's concern with community holiness and believers' eschatological identity. Paul reminds the Corinthians that "the saints will judge the

world” and even “angels” (6:2-3), making their present inability to judge “trivial cases” among themselves shameful (Garland, 2003, p. 213). Unit B climaxes with a vice list that includes sexual sins “the sexually immoral,” “adulterers,” and “men who practice homosexuality” (6:9), before proclaiming the transformative power of the gospel: “And such were some of you. 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” (6:11). This declaration establishes the theological foundation for 6:12-18: believers have been fundamentally transformed in their identity, and sexual immorality contradicts their new nature as those who are “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified.”

Unit C (6:12-20) then provides the theological climax and most concentrated argumentation about sexual ethics in the entire letter. Fee (1987, p. 251) observes that this passage “forms the theological heart of Paul’s ethical instruction regarding the body,” while Ciampa and Rosner (2010, p. 242) note it “provides the positive theological foundation that grounds Paul’s prohibitions of sexual immorality throughout the letter.” The unit functions as the hinge between Paul’s treatment of past failures (chapter 5) and future conduct (chapter 7), offering crucial theological rationale for sexual purity.

Within Unit C (6:12-20), verses 12-18 form a distinct argumentative sub-unit with careful rhetorical organization. Scholars have described the passage’s structure variously: Garland (2003, p. 234) identifies a concentric arrangement that focuses attention on the theological incompatibility between belonging to Christ and engaging in sexual immorality, while other commentators describe it as a progressive argument moving from freedom to resurrection, to union, to command. Whatever terminology is used, the structure moves from addressing the Corinthian slogan about freedom (6:12), through theological foundations about the body’s destiny (6:13-14), to the central argument about union with Christ (6:15-17), before returning to practical implications about the body’s significance (6:18).

The passage employs several rhetorical strategies. First, Paul uses diatribe style, quoting and refuting Corinthian slogans (“All things are lawful for me,” 6:12; “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” 6:13) that apparently justified sexual immorality (Thiselton, 2000, p. 459). Second, he employs a series of rhetorical questions (6:15, 16) to express shock and draw the Corinthians into recognizing the absurdity of their position. Third, he appeals to Scripture (Genesis 2:24 in verse 16) to establish the one-flesh nature of sexual union (Fee, 1987, p. 257). Fourth, he

uses imperatival statements (“Flee from sexual immorality,” 6:18) to command decisive action. This combination of engagement with their own language, theological argumentation, scriptural warrant, and direct command creates a comprehensive refutation of the Corinthian position.

The relationship between 6:12-18 and the broader letter structure is significant. Thematically, the passage connects backward to 6:11’s declaration of transformation (“you were washed, you were sanctified”), providing theological reasons why sexual immorality contradicts believers’ new identity. It connects forward to chapter 7’s detailed teaching on marriage and sexuality, supplying the theological foundation for Paul’s specific instructions about sexual relationships. The themes introduced in 6:12-18, particularly the body’s resurrection destiny, union with Christ, and the Spirit’s indwelling, recur throughout the letter (Ciampa & Rosner, 2010, p. 243).

2.4 Exegetical Meaning of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18

2.4.1 The Limits of Christian Freedom (verse 12)

In verse 12a, Paul quotes a Corinthian slogan that reflects a libertine attitude toward behaviour: “Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν” (“All things are lawful for me”). The adjective “πάντα” means “all, the whole, every kind of,” while the verb “ἔξεστιν,” meaning “it is permitted, lawful, possible,” appears in the third-person singular present tense, indicating an ongoing state of permission (Thiselton, 2000, p. 461; Green, 2005, p. 847). Many scholars argue this slogan likely originated from the Corinthians’ interpretation or misinterpretation of Paul’s own teaching on freedom from the Mosaic law (Garland, 2003, p. 236). Fee (1987, p. 253) suggests the Corinthians had taken Paul’s proclamation of freedom in Christ and extended it to justify behaviours Paul never intended, including sexual immorality. In their cultural context, where bodily appetites were considered morally neutral and sexuality was divorced from spiritual life, the Corinthians saw no ethical problem with engaging in sexual immorality, failing to recognise how such behaviour contradicted their union with Christ (Gardner, 2018, p. 435).

Paul responds not by rejecting Christian freedom but by qualifying it with the phrase “ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα συμφέρει” (“but not all things are helpful”). The word “συμφέρει,” translated as “helpful or beneficial,” implies consideration of what is profitable or advantageous (Ciampa & Rosner, 2010, p. 246). Gardner (2018, p. 435) notes that this concept of “beneficial/helpful” closely ties to the idea of edification, as seen in 1 Corinthians 10:23, where Paul parallels “beneficial” with “build

up”. The criterion is not merely individual permissibility but communal benefit whether an action will edify brothers and sisters in Christ.

In verse 12b, Paul repeats the slogan “Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν,” but adds a different qualification: “ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπό τινος” (“but I will not be dominated by anything”). The passive verb “ἐξουσιασθήσομαι,” meaning “to be brought under the power of or to be mastered,” appears in the future indicative, expressing Paul’s determined resolve (Thiselton, 2000, p. 462). This introduces the second criterion for Christian freedom: self-control. True freedom paradoxically requires discipline, the refusal to be enslaved to any practice or desire. Fee (1987, p. 254) observes the irony: the Corinthians thought they were exercising freedom by indulging bodily appetites, but Paul argues they were actually enslaving themselves to those very appetites.

The verse establishes two essential tests for evaluating Christian freedom: (1) Does it benefit others and build up the church? (2) Does it maintain self-control rather than creating enslaving patterns? As Gardner (2018, p. 436) argues, “one of the tests of the Corinthian slogan must be whether something is of loving benefit to brothers and sisters in Christ.” These parallel texts Galatians 5:13 and 1 Peter 2:16 reinforce that Christian freedom, while genuine, operates within the framework of love, edification, and service rather than self-indulgence (Witherington, 1995, p. 174).

2.4.2 The Body’s Eternal Purpose versus Food’s Temporary Function (verse 13)

In verse 13a, Paul quotes another Corinthian slogan: “τὰ βρώματα τῆ κοιλία καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν” (“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”). As Garland (2003, p. 238) notes, this saying reflects a materialistic view of bodily functions, treating all physical appetites as morally neutral and equivalent. The Corinthians apparently reasoned that just as eating satisfies hunger without moral significance, sexual activity similarly satisfies physical desire without ethical implications. This perspective drew on common Greco-Roman philosophical distinctions between the material body (considered morally irrelevant) and the soul or spirit (considered the locus of moral significance) (Thiselton, 2000, p. 464).

Paul partially affirms the slogan in 13b “ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ ταύτην καὶ ταῦτα καταργήσει” (“and God will destroy both one and the other”) acknowledging that both food and the digestive system are indeed temporary, destined for obsolescence in the resurrection (Fee, 1987, p. 256). The verb “καταργήσει,” meaning “will destroy or will abolish,” appears in the future tense, pointing to

eschatological transformation when present physical functions related to sustenance will no longer be necessary (cf. 1 Cor. 15:50).

However, Paul sharply distinguishes the body from the digestive system in 13c-d: “τὸ δὲ σῶμα οὐ τῆ πορνείᾳ ἀλλὰ τῷ κυρίῳ, καὶ ὁ κύριος τῷ σώματι” (“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body”). The noun “σῶμα” (“body”) refers to the whole person in their embodied existence, not merely physical flesh separate from spirit (Ciampa & Rosner, 2010, p. 248). The noun “πορνεία” (“sexual immorality”) broadly encompasses all forms of sexual activity outside marriage, including prostitution, adultery, and fornication (Garland, 2003, p. 239). The reciprocal statement “and the Lord for the body” emphasises the Lord’s commitment to the body, anticipating verse 14’s discussion of resurrection (Thiselton, 2000, p. 465).

Thiselton (2000, p. 463) argues that “the body is meant to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, and fornication is incompatible with this purpose,” highlighting the body’s sacred nature. Gardner (2018, p. 439) emphasises that “the body, subject to Christ’s lordship, is meant for a specific purpose, rendering sexual immorality wrong and intolerable in the church.” Fee (1987, p. 257) stresses the eschatological dimension: the body’s future resurrection demonstrates its enduring significance in God’s redemptive plan, fundamentally distinguishing it from digestive functions. This verse counters the Corinthian assumption that sexual activity is morally equivalent to eating: while eating involves a temporary bodily function, sexuality involves the whole person (σῶμα) in ways that affect one’s relationship with the Lord and one’s eschatological destiny (Witherington, 1995, p. 176).

2.4.3 Resurrection as the Foundation for Bodily Ethics (verse 14)

Verse 14 grounds the body’s eternal purpose in the resurrection: “ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ τὸν κύριον ἤγειρεν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐξεγερεῖ διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ” (“And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power”). The aorist verb “ἤγειρεν” (“raised up”) refers to the completed historical event of Christ’s resurrection, while the future verb “ἐξεγερεῖ” (“will raise”) extends this resurrection power to believers (Thiselton, 2000, p. 466). The phrase “διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ” (“by his power”) emphasises that the same divine power that accomplished Christ’s resurrection will accomplish believers’ resurrection, establishing continuity between Christ’s bodily resurrection and ours (Fee, 1987, p. 258).

Gardner (2018, p. 439) argues this verse “underscores the importance of the physical body, highlighting its future resurrection, analogous to Christ’s, into a truly physical yet spiritual and imperishable form.” As Paul develops more fully in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, the resurrection body will be “imperishable,” “raised in glory,” “raised in power,” and “a spiritual body” yet still genuinely a body, maintaining continuity with our present embodied existence (Ciampa & Rosner, 2010, p. 249).

The theological implications for sexual ethics are profound. If the body will be raised, then how believers use their bodies in the present has eternal significance. Garland (2003, p. 240) observes: “The future resurrection demonstrates that God values the body and intends it for eternal relationship with Christ. Sexual immorality treats the body as if it were meaningless and temporary, contradicting God’s redemptive purposes.” This verse provides an eschatological foundation for sexual purity: believers’ future bodily resurrection should shape their present bodily behaviour (Witherington, 1995, p. 177).

2.4.4 The Incompatibility of Union with Christ and Union with a Prostitute (verse 15)

Verse 15 introduces Paul’s central argument through a rhetorical question emphasizing believers’ union with Christ: “οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν μέλη Χριστοῦ ἐστίν;” (“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?”). The formula “οὐκ οἴδατε” (“do you not know”) appears frequently in 1 Corinthians (3:16; 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24) to recall what believers should already understand as foundational to their faith (Thiselton, 2000, p. 467). The phrase “τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν” (“your bodies”) emphasizes the physical, embodied nature of believers’ existence, while “μέλη Χριστοῦ” (“members of Christ”) uses the metaphor of body parts to express intimate belonging and organic connection (Fee, 1987, p. 259).

Paul’s second rhetorical question amplifies the gravity of sexual immorality: “ἄρα οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνης μέλη; μὴ γένοιτο” (“Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!”). The participle “ἄρα” (“having taken”) suggests violent removal or seizure, emphasizing the radical incompatibility of the action contemplated (Garland, 2003, p. 242). Gardner (2018, p. 441) observes: “Paul stresses that believers’ bodies belong to Christ, and joining with a prostitute not only rejects the Lord but also ruptures the sacred union.” The emphatic negation “μὴ γένοιτο” (“Never! May it never be!”) expresses Paul’s strongest possible rejection. Thiselton (2000, p. 468) notes this phrase “expresses not merely Paul’s personal

abhorrence but theological impossibility, it cannot be that one united to Christ should simultaneously unite with a prostitute.”

2.4.5 The One-Flesh Reality of Sexual Union (verse 16)

Verse 16 provides the scriptural foundation for Paul’s argument by appealing to Genesis 2:24: “ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνη ἐν σῶμά ἐστιν; Ἔσονται γάρ, φησίν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν” (“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh’”). The verb “κολλώμενος” (“being joined”) is a present passive participle meaning “to join closely,” “to cleave,” or “to unite,” emphasizing both the action and its continuing effect (Fee, 1987, p. 260). The same verb appears in Genesis 2:24 describing the husband “cleaving” to his wife, establishing Paul’s deliberate connection between the creation ordinance and sexual immorality.

The phrase “ἐν σῶμά ἐστιν” (“becomes one body”) uses “σῶμα” (“body”) rather than “σάρξ” (“flesh”), the term used in Genesis 2:24. Garland (2003, p. 243) argues: “Paul’s use of ‘body’ rather than ‘flesh’ underscores that sexual intercourse involves one’s entire being; identity, will, emotions, not merely physical contact.” The verb “ἐστιν” (“is”) in the present tense indicates not future consequence but immediate reality: sexual intercourse creates one-flesh union in the very act (Ciampa & Rosner, 2010, p. 252).

By quoting Genesis 2:24, Paul grounds his teaching in creation theology. Sexual union is not a human invention or cultural construct but part of God’s original design. The one-flesh union was established in Eden as the foundation for marriage, making sexual intercourse inherently significant and intended for the covenant relationship between husband and wife (Fee, 1987, p. 261). Gardner (2018, p. 443) notes: “Paul’s point is that regardless of the participants’ intentions or the transactional nature of prostitution, sexual intercourse creates one-flesh union. The physical act carries inherent meaning that cannot be negated by treating it as merely physical release.” This counters the Corinthian assumption that sex with a prostitute was meaningless and morally neutral (Witherington, 1995, p. 179).

2.4.6 Union with the Lord as One Spirit (verse 17)

Verse 17 provides the theological contrast to verse 16: “ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν πνευμᾷ ἐστιν” (“But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him”). The same verb

“κολλώμενος” (“being joined”) appears, creating deliberate parallelism between union with a prostitute and union with the Lord, but with crucial differences. While union with a prostitute produces “one body” (ἐν σῶμα), union with the Lord produces “one spirit” (ἐν πνεῦμα) (Thiselton, 2000, p. 470).

The noun “πνεῦμα” (“spirit”) is theologically rich, potentially referring to: (1) the believer’s spirit united with Christ’s Spirit; (2) the Holy Spirit creating union with Christ; or (3) the spiritual dimension of existence in contrast to the physical. Most scholars favour a combination of these meanings. Fee (1987, p. 262) argues: “‘One spirit’ denotes the profound spiritual union between the believer and Christ, created and sustained by the Holy Spirit. It represents the intimate relationship established through faith, whereby believers participate in Christ’s life.” Ciampa and Rosner (2010, p. 253) concur: “The Holy Spirit creates union with Christ such that believers become ‘one spirit’ with the Lord sharing his life, character, and destiny.”

Garland (2003, p. 245) observes: “Paul’s point is not that union with Christ is merely ‘spiritual’ as opposed to ‘physical,’ but that union with Christ defines believers’ core identity in a way that makes sexual union with a prostitute an incomprehensible contradiction.” Thiselton (2000, p. 471) adds: “The exclusivity inherent in ‘one spirit’ parallels the exclusivity of marriage covenant. Just as ‘one flesh’ implies exclusive sexual commitment between husband and wife, ‘one spirit’ with the Lord implies exclusive spiritual commitment that prohibits dividing one’s body between Christ and immorality.” Sexual immorality thus becomes a form of spiritual adultery (Witherington, 1995, p. 180)

2.4.7 The Command to Flee Sexual Immorality (verse 18)

Verse 18 issues Paul’s climactic command: “φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν” (“Flee from sexual immorality”). The imperative verb “φεύγετε” (“flee”) is in the present tense, indicating continuous action: “keep on fleeing or make it your practice to flee” (Fee, 1987, p. 263). The same verb appears elsewhere in Paul’s letters with a similar pastoral function, in 1 Corinthians 10:14 Paul commands believers to “flee from idolatry,” and in 2 Timothy 2:22 he instructs Timothy to “flee youthful passions.” Scholars also note a striking parallel in the narrative of Genesis 39:12, where Joseph physically runs from the advances of Potiphar’s wife. While Paul does not explicitly cite the Joseph narrative here, Fee (1987, p. 263) and Garland (2003, p. 246) do not identify a direct intertextual allusion, the parallel is instructive as an illustration of the same principle: sexual

temptation calls for decisive physical avoidance, not confident proximity or gradual resistance. The urgency of flight emphasizes that sexual temptation should not be managed by lingering in its presence but by swift and decisive separation.

Paul's second statement in verse 18 has generated significant interpretive discussion: “πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει” (“Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body”). As Gardner (2018, p. 443) notes, the Greek text reads “πᾶν ἁμάρτημα” (“every sin”) without the word “other,” which translations often add to clarify the contrast. The adverb “ἐκτὸς” (“outside, external to”) implies that most sins do not directly involve the body in a way contrary to its created purpose (Thiselton, 2000, p. 472).

The prepositional phrase “εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα” (“against his own body”) employs the intensive pronoun “ἴδιον” (“one’s own”) to emphasize personal violation. The present participle “ὁ πορνεύων” (“the one committing sexual immorality”) indicates a characteristic pattern, though the principle applies to individual acts as well (Fee, 1987, p. 264). Gardner (2018, p. 444) provides a helpful synthesis: “Paul is not suggesting that sexual immorality is worse than other sins in some absolute moral hierarchy. Rather, he is arguing that it uniquely affects the body in a way that contradicts its created design and purpose. The physical bonding that occurs in sexual intercourse, as described in Genesis 2:24, is contrary to the body’s purpose when exercised outside marriage.” The body was created for union with the Lord and for the one-flesh union of marriage; sexual immorality corrupts both purposes simultaneously (Witherington, 1995, p. 181).

2.4.8 Synthesis of Exegetical Analysis

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, Paul confronts the Corinthian church’s accommodation to sexual immorality by developing a comprehensive theology of the body, sexuality, and Christian identity. He addresses the Corinthian misuse of Christian freedom as licence for sexual sin by establishing two crucial criteria: freedom must benefit others and build up the church (v. 12a), and it must not create enslaving patterns of behaviour (v. 12b). Against the Corinthian assumption that sexual activity is morally neutral like eating, Paul argues that unlike food and the digestive system which are temporary the body has eternal purpose in union with the Lord, making sexual immorality incompatible with the body’s divine design (v. 13). This purpose is grounded in the resurrection:

God's power that raised Jesus will raise believers' bodies, demonstrating the body's eternal significance (v. 14).

Paul's central theological argument centres on union. Believers' bodies are members of Christ, making sexual union with a prostitute an incomprehensible violation of their union with him (v. 15). Sexual intercourse creates one-flesh union as established in creation (Genesis 2:24), even in prostitution, demonstrating that sexual acts carry inherent meaning that cannot be negated by treating them as merely physical (v. 16). In contrast to physical union with a prostitute, union with the Lord creates one spirit, representing the intimate spiritual relationship that defines Christian existence and makes sexual immorality a form of spiritual adultery (v. 17). The passage concludes with the urgent command to flee sexual immorality because it uniquely sins against the body in ways that violate its created purpose and believers' union with Christ (v. 18).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 through historical, literary, and exegetical analysis, demonstrating how Paul's teaching addresses both the specific challenges of the Corinthian context and the enduring realities of Christian sexual ethics. The historical analysis clarified the cultural and social pressures that made sexual immorality so tempting in Corinth, including the secular sex trade, the religious permissiveness associated with Aphrodite worship, and the social stratification that normalised sexual exploitation. The literary analysis demonstrated how 6:12-18 serves as the theological climax of chapters 5-6 and the foundation for chapter 7. The exegetical findings show that Paul draws on creation theology, Christology, pneumatology, and eschatology to establish that sexual immorality fundamentally contradicts Christian identity. These findings provide the theological foundation for Chapter 3's practical application to the contemporary context of the Church of Uganda.

Chapter 3: Applying the message of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18

3.1 Introduction

Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 was written to a specific community, the church in Corinth, but the theological framework he builds speaks to any community where the gospel takes root in a culture that normalizes sexual immorality. As the exegetical analysis in Chapter 2 demonstrated, Paul's argument moves through the body's eternal purpose, its resurrection destiny, believers' union with Christ, the one-flesh reality of sexual intercourse, and the urgent command to flee. These are not abstract doctrines; they are living realities that carry pastoral, homiletical, and discipleship implications for every generation of the Church, including the Church of Uganda today.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics National Population and Housing Census (UBOS, 2014), approximately 85 percent of Ugandans identify as Christian, divided principally between the Anglican Church of Uganda and the Roman Catholic Church, with a rapidly expanding Pentecostal and charismatic constituency; and yet the Church faces growing challenges to sexual purity, from the legacy of HIV/AIDS, to high rates of teenage pregnancy (UBOS & ICF, 2018, Musaba et al., 2022, p. 451) . The church therefore, occupies an extraordinary position of moral authority, and has a big responsibility of shaping the moral lives of its members.

Empirical research confirms that religious affiliation and religious teaching shape sexual behaviour among Ugandans. A landmark study by Agardh, Tumwine, and Ostergren (2011) of 980 students at Mbarara University of Science and Technology found that religious practice was one of the most significant determinants of sexual behaviour among Ugandan university students. The study found that 37 percent of male and 49 percent of female students had not previously engaged in sexual intercourse, and concluded that religion had a genuinely protective influence: religion emerged as a significant variable associated with lower rates of risky sexual behaviour (Agardh et al., 2011).

A study specifically focused on the role of religious leaders in Lira district, northern Uganda, conducted by Murungi et al. (2022) among 422 young people and 20 key informant religious leaders, found that young people whose religious leaders actively preached about abstinence and marital fidelity were 35.6 times more likely to adopt HIV prevention strategies than those who

were not. One Seventh-day Adventist religious leader in the study articulated the theological conviction that underlies this influence clearly: “We reject and condemn fornication among young people, and we discourage and condemn adultery. The only good way is abstinence and patience” (Murungi et al., 2022).

The purpose of this chapter is to bring Paul’s theology into direct conversation with the rising challenge of moral laxity in the Church of Uganda context. It does so in two steps: first, by drawing out the theological principles concerning sexual morality and the body from 1 Corinthians 6:12-18; and second, by proposing practical pastoral strategies for fostering sexual holiness among Christians in the church of Uganda.

3.2 Application principles drawn from 1 Corinthians 6:12-18

3.2.1 Theology of the Body

The first and most foundational application principle of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 to the Church of Uganda is the development of a positive, resurrection-grounded theology of the body. This may seem like an abstract theological exercise, but it is in fact the most practically important thing the Church can offer its members on the question of sexual ethics. People do not change their sexual behaviour because they are told not to sin; they change it when they come to see themselves differently, when they understand what they are, what their bodies are for, and what destiny awaits them.

Paul captures the transformative power of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 6:11: “And such were some of you. 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”. This declaration establishes the theological foundation for 6:12-18 and makes clear that believers have been fundamentally transformed in their identity. Sexual immorality, therefore, contradicts their new nature as those who are “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified.”

Paul’s argument in verses 13-14 rests on a contrast of eternal significance. The stomach and food are temporary, God will abolish both (v. 13). But the body (σῶμα) is not temporary. It is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. And the reason Paul gives for this is profound: God raised Jesus from the dead, and by that same power he will raise our bodies too (v. 14). The body that all believers inhabit in all its vulnerability, beauty, and frailty is a body that God intends to raise to

glory. That is the body they must steward. As Fee (1987, p. 256) observes, the resurrection establishes that the body has “enduring significance in God’s redemptive plan,” making sexual immorality not merely inadvisable but profoundly contrary to the body’s God-given destiny.

In the Ugandan context, this theology of the body confronts at least two destructive assumptions. The first is a form of implicit dualism taught by many upcoming city pastors, the assumption that what one does with the body is spiritually inconsequential as long as one maintains religious practice. This is not far from the Corinthian error that Paul was addressing: the assumption that bodily appetites, like hunger, are morally neutral. Paul refuses this separation of body and spirit. The σῶμα is the whole person in their embodied existence (Ciampa & Rosner, 2010, p. 248), and what believers do with their bodies is of direct theological consequence. The second destructive assumption is the commodification of the body, the treatment of one’s own body or another person’s body as a resource to be exploited for economic or sexual gratification. This is particularly relevant in a context where, as Choudhry et al. (2014) documented among Ugandan university students, approximately 25 percent reported involvement in transactional sex, driven by a complex mix of economic vulnerability, social aspiration, and power imbalance. Paul’s insistence that the body belongs to the Lord and is destined for resurrection directly challenges this commodification, calling believers to a radically different vision of the body’s worth.

Pastors and teachers in the Church of Uganda who preach from 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 should therefore ground their instruction not primarily in prohibition but in this positive vision: the body is for the Lord. This is not a burden but a glory. The body that prays, worships, serves, and loves is the body that God will one day raise in power, honour, and imperishable beauty (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

3.2.2 Reframing Christian Freedom

The second principle concerns Paul’s treatment of Christian freedom in verse 12. He quotes a Corinthian slogan “All things are lawful for me” that reflects a misappropriation of the gospel’s liberating message. The slogan is not wrong in itself; Paul does not deny that believers have been freed from the Mosaic law. What he challenges is the extension of that freedom to justify sexual immorality, and he does so by introducing two evaluative criteria that the Church of Uganda must teach with equal clarity.

The first criterion is communal benefit: not all things are “helpful/beneficial”. Gardner (2018, p. 435) argues that this word is closely tied to the concept of building others up, it is a communal criterion, asking whether a given exercise of freedom will benefit brothers and sisters in Christ. The second criterion is self-mastery: “I will not be dominated by anything” (v. 12b). True freedom refuses enslavement. As Fee (1987, p. 254) memorably observes, the Corinthians thought they were exercising freedom by indulging bodily appetites, “but Paul argues they are actually enslaving themselves to those very appetites.”

Both criteria carry direct pastoral relevance for the Church of Uganda. Among urban young people particularly, the rhetoric of personal freedom and self-determination has become a powerful cultural force. The message that one’s sexual choices are a private matter, harming no one and therefore subject to no moral evaluation, echoes the Corinthian slogan in a contemporary register. Paul’s response is not to deny the reality of Christian freedom but to reframe it entirely. Christian freedom is not the liberty to satisfy any appetite; it is the capacity to serve others in love and to maintain the self-governance that belongs to a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The research of Agardh et al. (2011) found that even among religious students in Uganda, religious belonging without active teaching did not produce consistent behavioural change. This is because belonging without formation does not develop the capacity for self-governance that Paul envisions in verse 12b. The Church of Uganda’s discipleship ministry must therefore engage not merely the will, telling people what not to do but the imagination, helping believers see their freedom as the gift of Spirit-empowered self-mastery rather than the licence for self-indulgence. Witherington (1995, p. 174) captures this well when he observes that Christian freedom, as Paul understands it across his letters, operates within “the framework of love, edification, and service rather than self-indulgence.”

3.2.3 One-Flesh reality of sexual union

Paul’s appeal to Genesis 2:24 in verse 16 is among the most theologically dense moves in his argument, and it carries profound implications for the Church of Uganda’s teaching on premarital sex, marriage preparation, and marital fidelity. By demonstrating that sexual intercourse creates a one-flesh union even in a commercial encounter with a prostitute, Paul establishes that sexual acts carry inherent theological meaning that cannot be negated by treating them as merely physical. The person who says “it means nothing” about a sexual encounter is, in Paul’s understanding,

profoundly mistaken. Every act of sexual intercourse creates the one-flesh bond that God designed for the covenant of marriage.

As Garland (2003, p. 243) argues, Paul's deliberate use of *σῶμα* (body, whole person) rather than *σάρξ* (flesh, physical substance) emphasizes that sexual union involves one's entire being (identity, will, emotion), not merely physical contact. This is not a prim elevation of sex to mystical status; it is a realistic account of what sexual intercourse actually does to people. The one-flesh union leaves a mark. It forms bonds. It creates history. This is why it matters so profoundly how, with whom, and in what relational context it occurs.

For the Church of Uganda, this theology of one-flesh union provides the positive theological foundation for three specific pastoral conversations. First, it grounds the call to premarital abstinence in something far richer than prohibition. Young Ugandans are not being asked to abstain from something meaningless; they are being invited to protect the integrity of a bond that God designed for the covenant of marriage. The one-flesh union was not made for casual encounters, transactional relationships, or the exploratory sexual culture that Choudhry et al. (2022) describe as a feature of contemporary Ugandan university life, what students in that study called "situationships," shaped by transactional scripts and facilitated by the sexualised social environment of the campus (Choudhry et al., 2022). Paul's one-flesh theology names this reality for what it is: a misappropriation of something sacred.

Second, the one-flesh theology strengthens the Church's teaching on marital fidelity. Adultery in Paul's framework is not merely a betrayal of a social arrangement; it is a violation of the deepest human bond, created by God in Eden and reaffirmed by Christ in the gospel. The Church of Uganda must teach marriage not primarily as a cultural institution to be entered and maintained through social obligation, but as a one-flesh covenant that reflects the faithfulness of God himself. Third, the one-flesh theology addresses the growing pattern of cohabitation without marriage in Uganda's urban centres. When couples live together sexually without the public covenant of marriage, they are not merely missing a social formality; they are creating one-flesh bonds in the very context Paul insists contradicts the design of those bonds.

3.2.4 Flee sexual immorality

Paul's climactic command in verse 18 "Flee from sexual immorality" is among the most practically wise things in the New Testament. The imperative verb "φεύγετε" ("flee") is in the present tense, indicating an ongoing practice: make it your way of life to run from sexual temptation. The same verb appears in the story of Joseph fleeing Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:12), and in Paul's instruction to Timothy to "flee youthful passions" (2 Tim. 2:22). The insight is consistent: sexual temptation is not primarily to be managed through confident proximity but through decisive, physical, habitual avoidance. Fee (1987, p. 263) notes that the urgency of "flee" reflects the recognition that "sexual temptation should not be resisted through proximity but through quick decisive separation."

In the contemporary Ugandan context, this pastoral wisdom takes on new urgency in light of the digital environment. The expansion of mobile internet access across Uganda has brought with it an unprecedented exposure to sexualised content. The Church of Uganda must develop explicit, practically grounded teaching on what it means to flee in a digital age. This includes guidance on accountability software, the formation of same-gender accountability relationships, and the cultivation of the kind of communal transparency where believers can speak honestly about sexual struggle without fear of condemnation. Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012, p. 112) observe that the most effective religious communities in shaping sexual behaviour in sub-Saharan Africa were those that combined clear moral teaching with strong relational networks of support communities where people felt both held accountable and genuinely supported.

Fleeing also requires the development of positive alternatives to the environments and relationships where sexual temptation is most acute. The Murungi et al. (2022) study in Lira district found that young people whose religious leaders were actively engaged in their communities preaching, teaching, and providing pastoral relationship were dramatically more likely to practise sexual restraint. The command to flee is not addressed to isolated individuals exercising private willpower; it is addressed to members of a community that is supposed to be actively cultivating the conditions for holy living together.

Perhaps most importantly, the command to flee must be held alongside the gospel of 1 Corinthians 6:11: "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Paul's command to flee is addressed not to the sinless but to the redeemed people who know their own failure and have been met by grace. The Church of

Uganda must cultivate a pastoral culture in which sexual failure is met with the same gospel that Paul proclaims: restoration, not condemnation; transformation, not excommunication. This requires enormous pastoral courage, because it means holding the truth and the grace together; refusing to minimise the seriousness of sexual immorality while refusing equally to put the sexually fallen beyond the reach of redemption.

3.3 Practical strategies for fostering sexual holiness

3.3.1 Theologically grounded preaching

The most common failure of preaching on sexual ethics is to move too quickly from theology to morality, to arrive at the prohibition before the congregation has been invited into the theological vision that makes the prohibition meaningful. Paul does not do this. He spends five verses building a theological framework: the body's resurrection destiny, union with Christ, the one-flesh reality of sexual intercourse, before he issues the command in verse 18. The command lands with force precisely because it has been earned by the theological argument that precedes it.

Ugandan preachers who work from 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 should resist the homiletical temptation to move straight to verse 18. The congregation needs to be brought into the theological world Paul inhabits. They need to see themselves as people whose bodies are members of Christ, destined for resurrection, temples of the Spirit. They need to feel the absurdity of the question Paul poses in verse 15: "Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?" Only when the congregation inhabits that theological world will the command to flee carry its proper weight. As Garland (2003, p. 234) notes, Paul's mirrored structure is designed to concentrate attention on the theological incompatibility between belonging to Christ and engaging in sexual immorality. Preachers should trust that structure and follow it.

Agardh, Tumwine, and Ostergren's (2011) study, found that of those students with sexual experience, 46 percent of males and 23 percent of females reported having had three or more sexual partners, the conclusion was that religious affiliation alone without active and robust religious instruction did not uniformly prevent premarital sexual activity (Agardh et al., 2011). Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012), in their comprehensive empirical study of religion and the AIDS epidemic across thirty-one sub-Saharan African countries, also found that while religious communities often played a vital role in shaping sexual ethics and providing care for those affected by HIV/AIDS,

the quality and theological depth of the teaching mattered enormously. Churches that offered theologically grounded moral instruction tended to produce more sustained changes in sexual behaviour than those that relied on prohibition alone (Trinitapoli & Weinreb, 2012, p. 89). This points directly to the need for the kind of comprehensive theological argument that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, which does not merely prohibit sexual immorality but explains, from the depths of Christian theology, why it is incompatible with the believer's identity, destiny, and union with Christ.

3.3.2 Discipleship, catechesis, and the formation of sexual identity

The empirical research reviewed in this chapter makes one thing unmistakably clear: religious affiliation without theological formation does not consistently shape sexual behaviour. Agardh et al. (2011) found that Ugandan university students who were formally religious but not actively formed in their faith did not consistently practice sexual restraint. This finding calls the Church of Uganda to invest seriously in discipleship and catechesis that engages sexual ethics not as a taboo subject to be avoided but as a central dimension of Christian identity.

Effective sexual discipleship in the Ugandan context will address at minimum the four theological convictions drawn from 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 that this chapter has identified: the body's eternal dignity as destined for resurrection; the communal and self-mastering nature of Christian freedom; the theological significance of one-flesh union as the proper and only appropriate context for sexual intercourse; and the habitual, proactive practice of fleeing sexual immorality. These convictions need to be taught not once but repeatedly, from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood, woven into the normal fabric of church life rather than reserved for special occasions or crisis moments.

3.3.3 Theologically rich premarital ministry

Given Paul's teaching on the one-flesh reality of sexual union (vs16), the Church of Uganda's ministry to couples preparing for marriage is of strategic importance. Premarital ministry provides the ideal context for theological teaching on the body, sexuality, and one-flesh covenant to be applied directly and personally. Couples preparing for marriage need to understand not merely the legal and social dimensions of what they are entering but its theological depth: they are about to

create a one-flesh union that Paul traces back to creation itself (Gen. 2:24) and that reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31–32).

The research of Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012) confirms that religious communities which invest in the formation of couples, providing structured teaching, pastoral relationships, and ongoing support, produce marriages that are more stable and sexually faithful. The Church of Uganda should ensure that its premarital ministry is theologically rich, not merely practical. It should engage directly with questions about sexual history, the meaning of one-flesh union, and the role of sexual intimacy within marriage.

3.3.4 Communal accountability structures

Paul’s concern in 1 Corinthians 5-6 is never merely individual; it is always communal. The holiness he calls for is a communal holiness. The failure he addresses is a communal failure, the church that tolerated sexual immorality in its midst was implicated in it (5:2, 6). The Church of Uganda must develop communal structures of accountability that reflect this corporate dimension of sexual ethics: small groups, same-gender mentoring relationships, and pastoral cultures of transparency where sexual struggle can be named and met with both truth and grace.

At the same time, the community that holds people accountable must also be the community that welcomes people back. The declaration of 1 Corinthians 6:11 “such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified,” establishes the pattern: the Church is a community of people in the process of being transformed, not a community of the already-perfect. Murungi et al. (2022) found that the most effective religious leaders in Uganda were those who combined clear moral teaching with accessible pastoral care, who named sexual immorality for what it was while remaining genuinely approachable to those who had fallen. This is the pastoral posture that Paul’s theology demands.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has applied the exegetical findings of Chapter 2 to the concrete realities of the Church of Uganda, arguing that Paul’s theology in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 addresses the Ugandan context with striking directness and power. The four theological principles identified: a resurrection-grounded theology of the body, a reframing of Christian freedom toward communal benefit and self-mastery, the one-flesh theology of sexual union, and the ongoing practice of fleeing sexual

immorality, provide a comprehensive and pastorally actionable framework for the Church's ministry.

The empirical research reviewed in this chapter confirms both the Church's strategic influence on sexual behaviour in Uganda and the insufficiency of religious affiliation without theological formation. The findings of Agardh et al. (2011), Murungi et al. (2022), Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012), and others consistently point in the same direction: it is the quality and depth of theological teaching, held within communities of genuine pastoral care and accountability, that produces lasting change. This is precisely what Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18 provides, not a list of prohibitions but a vision of the body so theologically rich that sexual immorality becomes, in the end, unthinkable.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

This study set out to answer two questions: what are the key theological principles concerning sexual morality and the body in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, and what practical strategies can the Church of Uganda adopt to foster sexual holiness among its members? While the cultural pressures in ancient Corinth and those facing the Church of Uganda differ in many ways, the fundamental challenge remains the same: how does a community of people who belong to Christ live with bodily integrity in a world that normalises sexual immorality?

This concluding chapter brings together the study's major findings, discusses their theological and pastoral significance, acknowledges the study's limitations, and offers recommendations for both practice and further research.

4.2 Summary of the Study

Chapter 1 established the research problem and its context. Despite Uganda's overwhelming Christian majority, the Church faces a persistent and serious challenge with sexual immorality, evidenced in high rates of teenage pregnancy, documented cases of moral failure among church leaders, and the growing influence of a sexualised digital culture. The chapter identified a significant gap in the existing literature: while theological scholarship on sexuality and empirical research on religion and sexual behaviour in Africa both exist in abundance, no study had brought them into direct conversation through a careful exegetical treatment of a specific biblical text applied to the Ugandan church context.

Chapter 2 addressed that gap through a detailed historical, literary, and verse-by-verse exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:12-18. It placed the passage within its historical context, showing how the commercial sex trade, the cultural normalisation of prostitution, and the philosophical separation of body and spirit in Roman Corinth created pressures remarkably similar to those facing the contemporary Church. It then traced Paul's argument carefully through the Greek text, demonstrating that Paul's response to sexual immorality is not primarily a list of prohibitions but a theological vision: a vision of the body's resurrection destiny, of believers' union with Christ,

of the one-flesh reality of sexual intercourse established in creation, and of the urgent, ongoing call to flee sexual immorality.

Chapter 3 brought those exegetical findings into direct dialogue with the Church of Uganda. Drawing on empirical research from Uganda and sub-Saharan Africa, it demonstrated that the Church's moral influence on sexual behaviour is real and significant, but depends heavily on the theological depth and pastoral quality of its teaching. It proposed four practical strategies: theologically grounded preaching, discipleship and catechesis that treat sexual ethics as central to Christian identity, theologically rich premarital ministry, and communal accountability structures that hold truth and grace together.

4.3 Summary of Key Findings

The exegetical analysis identified four theological principles that together constitute Paul's theology of the body and sexual ethics in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18.

The first is a resurrection-grounded theology of the body. In verses 13-14, Paul establishes that the body is not a temporary vessel to be used and discarded. It is destined for resurrection by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. This gives the body a dignity and a destiny that renders sexual immorality not merely inadvisable but profoundly contradictory to who believers are and what God intends for them.

The second principle is the reframing of Christian freedom. Paul did not deny the Corinthian slogan that "all things are lawful for me." He reframed it. It is clear from the exegetical findings that true Christian freedom is not the licence to satisfy every appetite; it is the capacity to serve others in love and to exercise the Spirit-empowered self-mastery that refuses to be enslaved by any desire or habit.

The third principle is the one-flesh theology of sexual union. By drawing on Genesis 2:24, Paul establishes that sexual intercourse is never merely physical. Every act of sexual union creates a bond involving the whole person (identity, emotion, and will). This bond was designed by God for the covenant of marriage. When it is formed outside that covenant, something sacred is misappropriated, and the person is marked in ways that go far deeper than they realize.

The fourth principle is the urgent, ongoing command to flee. The present imperative “φεύγετε” calls believers not to manage sexual temptation from a position of confident proximity but to make decisive, habitual avoidance their way of life. This is not weakness. It is wisdom, the same wisdom Joseph demonstrated in Genesis 39 and that Paul urges in 2 Timothy 2:22.

4.4 Discussion

The theological resources Paul draws on: future bodily resurrection, union with Christ, and the one-flesh creation theology, are very key pastoral tools for fostering sexual holiness. They are the instruments by which he invites the Corinthians, and through them every subsequent generation of the Church, into a way of seeing themselves that makes holiness not just obligatory but desirable.

This study also serves as a timely reminder that the Church cannot outsource its responsibility for sexual formation to culture, government, or even the family. As the empirical research of Agardh et al. (2011), Murungi et al. (2022), and Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012) consistently shows, the Church holds extraordinary moral authority. People listen when the Church speaks. However, what the Church says, and how theologically deep and pastorally warm that speech is, carries profound weight. It is also clear from this study that religious affiliation without formation changes nothing: a Church member who attends services regularly but has never been invited into the rich theological vision Paul unfolds in 1 Corinthians 6 is, in practice, no better formed for sexual holiness than someone with no faith commitment at all.

4.5 Recommendations

4.5.1 For Church Leaders and Preachers

Church leaders in Uganda are encouraged to preach sexual ethics from within the full theological framework that Paul builds in 1 Corinthians 6:12-18, resisting the temptation to jump straight to prohibition without first inviting the congregation into the theological vision that gives prohibition its meaning. The body’s resurrection destiny, believers’ union with Christ, and the one-flesh reality of sexual union are not advanced doctrines for seminaries; they are the pastoral heartbeat of Paul’s argument, and they belong in every pulpit.

4.5.2 For Discipleship and Christian Education

The Church of Uganda is encouraged to develop structured discipleship curricula that engage sexual ethics not as a taboo subject but as a central dimension of Christian identity. These should be age-appropriate and ongoing: taught during children and youth camps, young adult fellowships, and adult education programmes; with the goal of helping believers see themselves as people whose bodies belong to Christ and are destined for resurrection.

4.5.3 For Premarital Ministry

Premarital ministry should be theologically substantive, engaging couples directly with the meaning of one-flesh union, sexual history, and the covenantal nature of what they are entering. Practical and legal matters are important, but they should sit within a theological framework that helps couples understand their marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship with his Church.

4.5.4 For Communal Accountability

Local churches are encouraged to develop intentional small group and same-gender mentoring structures where sexual struggle can be named honestly and met with both truth and grace. The pastoral culture that Paul's theology demands is one in which failure does not lead to permanent exclusion but to the same gospel that 1 Corinthians 6:11 proclaims: "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified." Accountability without grace produces shame. Grace without accountability produces complacency. The Church of Uganda needs both, held together with pastoral courage.

4.6 Recommendation for Further Research

This study has identified one area that is both beyond its scope and urgently important enough to warrant dedicated scholarly attention: the theology and practice of restoring those who have fallen into sexual immorality.

The cases documented in this study including, the suspension of Archbishop Stanley Ntagali and the dismissal of Watoto Church pastor Zane Solomon Mugabi, and the many other undocumented stories such as the recent controversy surrounding a female priest in Western

Uganda who was stopped from ministry because of her husband's extramarital affair; illustrate that even the most theologically committed and institutionally accountable churches struggle when it comes to handling cases of sexual immorality. The Church of Uganda's current responses have tended toward either reactive discipline in the form of removal from ministry, or quiet restoration without any publicly articulated theological process.

Neither of these approaches fully reflects the pastoral richness of the New Testament's teaching on repentance, restoration, and the ongoing work of grace. A further study on this theme would benefit greatly from grounding in Paul's own letter to the Corinthians, particularly 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, where Paul addresses the restoration of the very man whose sexual immorality he had called the church to discipline in 1 Corinthians 5.

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