

1 Corinthians 6:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

Analysis

What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? Kollaō (κολλάω, 'joined, united, glued') indicates permanent bond—the same word for cleaving in marriage (Genesis 2:24 LXX). Paul cites Genesis: **for two, saith he, shall be one flesh** (esontai gar, phēsin, hoi dyo eis sarka mian, ἔσονται γάρ, φησὶν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν). Mia sarx (μία σάρξ, 'one flesh') isn't mere physical contact but ontological union—two become a single entity.

The scandal: Paul applies marital one-flesh language to prostitution. This devastates any 'it's just sex' rationale. There's no such thing as casual sex—every sexual union creates one-flesh bond, whether within or outside covenant. Prostitution profanes what God designed for lifelong, exclusive union. The Corinthians thought they could compartmentalize: spiritual union with Christ, physical recreation with prostitutes. Paul says: impossible—bodies aren't shells but integral to personhood.

Historical Context

Genesis 2:24 described marriage, but Jewish and Christian interpreters saw it as revealing sex's intrinsic nature: unitive. Unlike animals, human sexuality carries personal, relational, spiritual weight. Corinthian culture trivialized sex—slaves as sexual objects, prostitutes as service providers. Paul's revolutionary claim: every sexual act has marital-level significance. This dignifies the marginalized

(prostitutes are persons, not commodities) and calls believers to sexual integrity reflecting God's covenant faithfulness (Hosea 1-3).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the 'one flesh' teaching challenge beliefs that sex can be purely physical without emotional or spiritual bonding?
2. What past sexual unions (even those you considered 'casual') might still affect you, requiring confession, healing, and renewing of the mind?
3. How can the church recover the biblical vision of sex as sacred, covenant-creating, and inseparable from permanent commitment?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	οὐκ	οἶδατε	ὅτι	ὁ	κολλώμενος	τῇ	πόρνη	μίαν
What	not	know ye	that	G3588	he which is joined	G3588	to an harlot	one
G2228	G3756	G1492	G3754		G2853		G4204	G1520

σῶμά	ἐστιν;	Ἔσονται	γάρ	φησὶν	οἱ	δύο	εἰς	σάρκα
body	is	shall be	for	saith he	G3588	two	one	flesh
G4983	G2076	G2071	G1063	G5346		G1417	G1519	G4561

μίαν
one
G1520

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 2:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Ephesians 5:31 (Parallel theme): For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Mark 10:8 (Parallel theme): And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

Hebrews 11:31 (Parallel theme): By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Genesis 38:24 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

Genesis 34:31 (Parallel theme): And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?

Judges 16:1 (Parallel theme): Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.