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*Saint Mark's Church
Sunday School*

**Holiness and Contemporary Issues: The Body
Code:10SO1**

AIM:

To understand that our body is not our own. It has been sanctified by the Lord, filled with the Spirit of God, and united as a member of Christ. In acknowledging this we can then advance the purpose of the body which is to glorify God.

VERSES:

1Cor3:16-17

1Cor6:15-16; 19-20

NOTES TO THE SERVANT

Listening to the following sermon by Fr Pishoy Salama may be beneficial in your preparation of this lesson:

<http://orthodoxsermons.org/sermons/temple-god>

There is a real focus in present day society to live for the moment. To a student this may often mean, that to enjoy oneself at any point in time, the student may subject the body to inappropriate risks for temporary gratification without adequate awareness of the long term harm to their body, and often time also their spiritual life. Of serious concern at the moment amongst teens is curiosity with drugs, tattoos, and relationships with the opposite sex. There are those also who seek to participate in dangerous adventure activities for the sake of enjoyment or being seen as superior amongst their peers. For certain, those students who have fallen into the trap of seeking to gratify the body, do not appreciate the value of their body and the role which Christ plays in it.

INTRO TO THE LESSON/ACTIVITY

Ask the students to reflect on how they would think of a person that came into a beautiful church building and started spray painting the walls with graffiti and horrible words, breaking church furniture over the pews, throwing the hymn books through the stained glass windows and tearing down the altar?

Would that be all right? Would they view this kind of destruction of the house of God as being "Good"? Would they encourage Christians to destroy church buildings? No! Most Christian would never dream of destroying a church building or taking any action like that!¹

¹ Activity taken from <http://www.wolfeborobible.com/drugs.html>

What about then those who want to destroy the ‘Temple of God’, which is actually our body?

The LESSON

St Paul writes in 1Cor3:16-17

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are”.

The Temple of God was first built as a permanent dwelling by King Solomon. King David in his love and zeal for God wanted to build this temple, but God would not let him, as he was a man of war and involved in too much shedding of blood (see Chronicles 28:3). Instead King Solomon built it. When King Solomon completed the Temple it was a most magnificent building, and in which the Israelites believed the Spirit of God dwelt. It was not only the most magnificent building but also the most sacred place in which people would go to pray, and God would listen. Thus the temple was a place of absolute holiness and purity.

It is no surprise then that St Paul describes our bodies as temples of God. For if God is to dwell in our body, then it must at all times be kept sacred, pure and holy. It must be looked after and at all times remain a suitable dwelling place devoted to the service of God.

There is no doubt that the Spirit of God dwells in us who are baptized in Jesus Christ’s name. In John 3:5, Jesus says that unless one is born of the water and Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. This is the same Spirit which God breathed in man when He created man in the beginning in the image and likeness of God.

If then our body is a sacred place in which the Spirit of God dwells, how can we allow our body to be violated?

Cigarette smoking is a filthy habit which will destroy the lungs, lead to cancer, shorten a person’s life span, and therefore destroy your body.

Drugs and alcohol also have significant side-effects, can lead to addiction, and force the body and mind to act in unnatural ways which can be catastrophic (such as fatal accidents or overdoses).

Tattooing leads to permanent disfiguring of the body in an unnatural way, with no permanent long term benefit. It is often associated with infections and can cause other diseases.

Let's not forget what Jesus did when he walked into the Temple and saw that it was violated such that it was no longer being used as a place of worship. Whilst some might describe Jesus' reaction as severe, it goes to show that God will not regard violations of his dwelling place (our bodies) as acceptable.

St Paul goes on to write in 1 Cor6:15

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?”

These strong rhetorical questions by St Paul are stark reminders of the effect of our actions when we focus on worldly or fleshly lusts. For what we do to our bodies, we do also to Christ, and to our brothers and sisters who are also united with us in the one body with Christ.

Not only do we disrespect God when we are reckless with our bodies and our actions, but we could also be a stumbling block to others. See Romans 14:13, “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.”

CONCLUSION

If our bodies then are temples of God, then they ought to be holy places or sanctuaries for Christ. When we accept that our bodies are dwelling places for the Holy Spirit, then we acknowledge that our whole life is a living sacrifice to the Lord. Amongst the sacrifices we can offer are:

- humility in our dealings with others and with God, and
- praising the Lord.

We should therefore use our bodies to glorify Him, rather than focusing on short term worldly lusts, which can defile our sanctuary. This is confirmed by what St Paul says in 1 Cor10:23; that all things are lawful, but not all things are helpful for me.

Glory be to God forever, Amen.