



Community Group Study Guide Week of June 16, 2019

This week, we looked at parts of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, where Paul teaches the church how to navigate life in a city that is full of superstitions and idolatry. The church had written Paul asking if it was okay to eat meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols. The meat sold at the temple was much more affordable than the meat sold at the market. Some of the Christians understood that the idolatry of the temple was just silly superstition. Other Christians, however, were being tempted by the meat to slide back into their former superstitions and idolatrous lifestyle. The church needed help because their question was not concerning a clear right or wrong issue. Instead, it was a question of circumstance and conscience.

Paul reminds the church that these pagan idols are nothing. In and of themselves they are inanimate objects with no power or being. Demons can not inhabit food and sneak into people's bodies, and pagan priests can not make food clean by sacrificing it to false gods. In that sense, Christians are free to eat the meat, so long as they know the truth and can do so with a clean conscience. On the other hand, a heart that *believes* the pagan system is committing real idolatry (worshipping demons), and it would be sinful for them to eat that meat if they were superstitiously trusting that the idols made it clean. The problem for the Corinthians is that some of them clearly understood this and faced no temptation while eating the meat, but others who were weaker in their faith were tempted by the meat to stumble back into their former way of trusting the idols and seeing the world through pagan eyes. What was permissible for one group, was sinful for another.

Scripture is very clear about matters of morality. Certain things are always right, and others are always wrong. When it comes to matters of wisdom and conscience, however, circumstances and past experiences can make something okay for one Christian but not for another. For example, Christians are free to drink alcohol so long as they don't get drunk. A Christian with a history of alcoholism, however, may feel as though drinking is not only foolish but sinful. Their conscience may not allow them to drink because they feel the temptation to stumble back into their former sinful habit. Paul warns us to not allow our freedom to cause another's sin. In this modern example, Paul may say I am free to have a drink, but out of love I will refrain from doing so with my brother or sister if it trips them up. The big idea Paul wants the church to understand is that our freedom in Christ does not give us a license to sin or to serve ourselves, but it gives us freedom from sin to love and serve our brothers and sisters in a way that helps them grow in their knowledge and faith. Sometimes this means we lay down our rights, in order to better serve our siblings.

A Christians we need to be wise, discerning, and walking in the Spirit to know how and when to apply this passage. Paul is not talking about hypothetical situations, so applying this passage requires us to know one another's backgrounds, personalities, and struggles with temptation. Paul is not saying "to each his own" or relativizing sin. Instead, he's trying to help us see that it is possible to sin by doing something morally neutral, if you're doing so with the wrong mindset, attitude, or motivations. Therefore, we must be careful and considerate of one another, and especially those who are still "infants in Christ."

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To understand how to relate to other Christians whose opinions differ in matters of wisdom or conscience.

Heart

To love God's truth and God's people.

Hands

To refrain from activity which might cause a weaker Christian to sin, and patiently spur one another on to grow in both love and knowledge.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership or Baptism:

Contact

admin@mosaicboston.com to sign up for our next membership class or learn more about baptism.

Mosaic JP:

Please keep Mosaic JP and other faithful Boston church plants in your prayers. If your CG would like to serve Mosaic JP together on a Sunday please contact andy@mosaicboston.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:23-33

Paul's argument here is very nuanced. It might be helpful to read the summary on page 1 before beginning this week's discussion. Paul is not relativizing sin. Instead, he's showing that morally neutral acts can be either permissible or sinful depending on the circumstance and the person.

- When we properly understand Paul's reasoning and teaching from these passages, what are some possible modern examples of situations where this might apply to us?
- In these situations, how does Paul teach us to relate to people who feel as though it would be sinful for them to do something that is permissible in Scripture? What do we want to avoid, and what are we trying to achieve?
- In order to live this out, we need to know one another enough to know what might cause a fellow Christian to stumble into sin. This is one reason it is vital for us to belong to a church body. What are some of the obstacles and opportunities we have to truly knowing one another?
- Can you think of a time when your conscience forbid you to do something that scripture didn't forbid? Or, can you think of a time when you refrained from something in order to not offend a weaker Christians consciences?
- How does a lack of knowledge diminish love? How does a lack of love diminish knowledge?
- How does Jesus show us perfect truth and love together?
- The driving force behind Paul's argument is that the Gospel compels him to lay down his freedoms and rights whenever it might help others know Jesus and grow in the faith. Why might we lack the drive to see others grow in Christ? Where does Paul get that drive, and how can we develop it if it's lacking in our lives?