

I Corinthians 8 – 12 December 2021

“Do No Harm Part 1 of 3: Conscience Issues”

Introduction

*We're in a very practical book, teaching us about:

- Divisions (*Chapters 1-4*), Disputes (*Chapters 5-6*)
- Christian marriage when ideal is lost (*Chap 7*)
- Conscience issues ie eating of meats (*Chap 8-10*)
- Proper public worship (*Chap 11-14*)
- Doctrine of the Resurrection (*Chap 15-16*)

*Conscience issues are questions that don't have a Biblical right or wrong

*Can I drink Vodka and liquor?

*Should I get the COVID vaccine?

*Is this outfit modest enough?

*Conscience issue here is of eating meats but remember the context - Corinth is a divided & lustful

*In answering question about meats, he addresses a primary goal for us toward others, that is DO NO HARM

***Today 4 keys for how we can “do no harm”**

toward others related to conscience issues

1st key is to “Let love lead the discussion” (Vs 1-3)

Read Vs 1

1. The question is, can we eat the meat that’s leftover from the sacrifices in the pagan temples
2. When we focus on what we know that others don’t know, it divides us as our pride comes out
 - a. Of course, we’re to grow in the grace & knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we don’t lead with it. We lead with love!
 - i. We’re passionate about knowing God
 - ii. That’s why we teach the WHOLE Bible
 - b. When we focus on loving others, it unites us as the Spirit of God shines forth
 - i. Knowledge exalted will divide us
 - ii. Love exalted will unite us

Read Vs 2

1. If you present that you’re intellectually advanced in spiritual matters, you’re proving that you haven’t learned that primary lesson yet

Read Vs 3

1. But if you love & help advance others, NOW you've learned how to come toward the heart of God
2. Remember, all that we do is really just an example of “follow the Leader” – God
 - a. Paul's advice isn't just random answers, but examples of just what God would have us do
3. Don't forget, this discussion of knowledge & love is all regarding ‘what to do about this issue of conscience’ – can we eat that meat or not?
4. So Paul's answer begins with “use your knowledge to love & help each other, not to force others into anything”
 - a. Will my decision on the subject honor God and show respect & love for others?

2nd key is to “Make an informed decision” (Vs 4-6)

Read Vs 4

1. *Idol* – Gk word means image, not substance
 - a. Hb word means vanity, empty, thing of not
2. There is no substance or power to the activity that happens to this food at the idol temple, as there is w/ the power & activity of God Almighty
 - a. Read Rom 14:14
 - b. There’s no object or resource this is inherently sinful
 - c. There’s divide between objects & practices
 - i. He’s not saying we can indulge in idolatry (deals w/ that in chap 10)
 - ii. He’s saying the meat is just meat
3. “*We know*” – Don’t make decisions in a vacuum, do what we can to learn the subject

Read Vs 5

1. Practices that happen in these temples are made up, just as the gods that they're worshipping are fake
 - a. They're 'called gods', but there's not real
2. Part of learning THIS subject was to accept that there's nothing happening to that meat that could affect your body, mind or spirit

Reada Vs 6

1. 'All things' including the meat in these idol temples, are creations of Jehovah God
2. There's only one God & He created all things for His purposes
3. Just b/c someone misuses something that God has created, doesn't mean we can't use it
 - a. Example – the internet

3rd key is to “Accept that your position is no better than most’s” (Vs 7-8)

Intro

1. There are those that aren't making informed decisions not letting love lead – our position is better than that
2. But even for those doing their best to follow the Lord – we can come up with different answers

Read Vs 7

1. We should teach everyone that the idol that this food was offered to is nothing and without power
2. There are those that are focused on, or think on the idol instead in focusing on, or thinking on God

Read Vs 8

1. *Commendeth us* – Brings us close to
 - a. What you do, or don't do with this physical substance cannot bring you any closer to God

2. We can differ in good conscience & both still be drawing closer to God everyday
3. Read Rom 14:10
4. We are judged of God for such things, not by each other

4th key is “Don’t needlessly offend others” (Vs 9-13)

Read Vs 9

1. What is true Christian liberty?
 - a. Christian Liberty is doing things that aren’t universally accepted as a means to please God
 - b. Christian Liberty is the rejection of doing or not doing things as focus of what pleases God
 - c. Read Gal 5:1 – We’ve been set free from the control of keeping the Law perfectly
 - i. This verse makes us less concerned about taking liberties
 - ii. All things have become lawful for us but we shouldn’t be brought under the control of anything but the H.S. – (see I Cor 6:12)
2. If we can stand open-faced toward God, acknowledge the issue, THEN we believe God would allow it – This thought is all thru Rom 14
 - a. So Rom 14 makes us more concerned to not take liberties

3. Another key to balancing Christian Liberties is found in this verse I Cor 8:9
 - a. Don't let our liberties become a cause of concern for others watching

Read Vs 10-12

1. Vs 10 – “*hast knowledge*” – refers to vs 4 – the knowledge that the idol is nothing & w/o power
2. To the weaker brother, it makes it look like “sin” isn't taken seriously – this spiritually harms them
3. B/c Christ died for them, as us, we should be doing only that which will spiritually helpful for them & build them up
4. When love lead, instead of knowledge, we find ourselves limiting our liberties to keep unity and stay focused on the big purposes God has for us

Read Vs 13

1. Not hindering another believer's spiritual growth is more important than my comforts & pleasures
2. All of Chap 9 will be Paul's example of this vs

Conclusion

So, rule #1 for our practices in life: Do No Harm! We will face many conscience issues & here are 4 keys to get us thru

- 1. Let love lead the discussion**
 - a. Let our knowledge of the subject be always wrapped in love
- 2. Make an informed decision**
 - a. Don't make a dumb choice, learn the subject
- 3. Accept that your position is no better than most other positions**
 - a. Some issues of life have no perfect answer
 - b. These subjects should remind us that they are not the hills worth dying on
- 4. Don't needlessly offend others**
 - a. Keeping conscience issues in their place will allow us to continue to focus our efforts on bringing ourselves and others toward the heart of God

Stay tuned for chapters 9 & 10 because Paul has much more to say on this subject to round out the discussion