

*What am I
supposed to do?*

PRACTICAL, PERSONAL, BIBLICAL ETHICS

1

(Series Theme Slide)

**Before I headed out for vacation, we had spent a month
pondering this question . . . READ SLIDE**

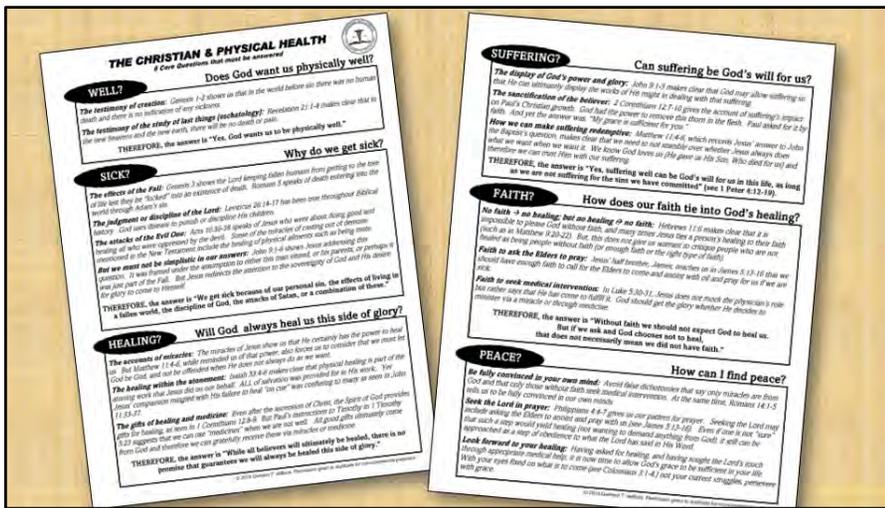
TR: We dealt with . . .

C	O	M	M	I	T								
R	E	S	T										
O	P	E	R	A	T	E							
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R	E	A	S	O	N								
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2

... a way to determine the will of God with 9 critical steps

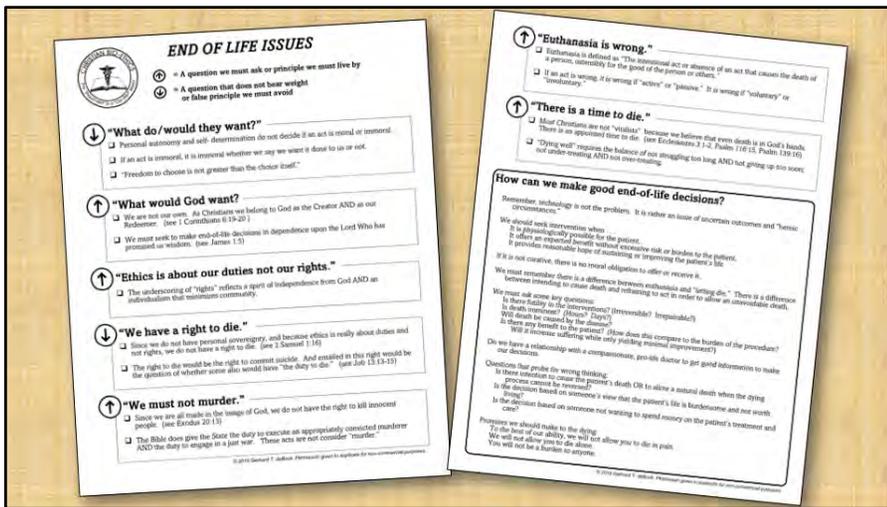
TR: We dealt with hard questions about ...



3

... bioethics ...

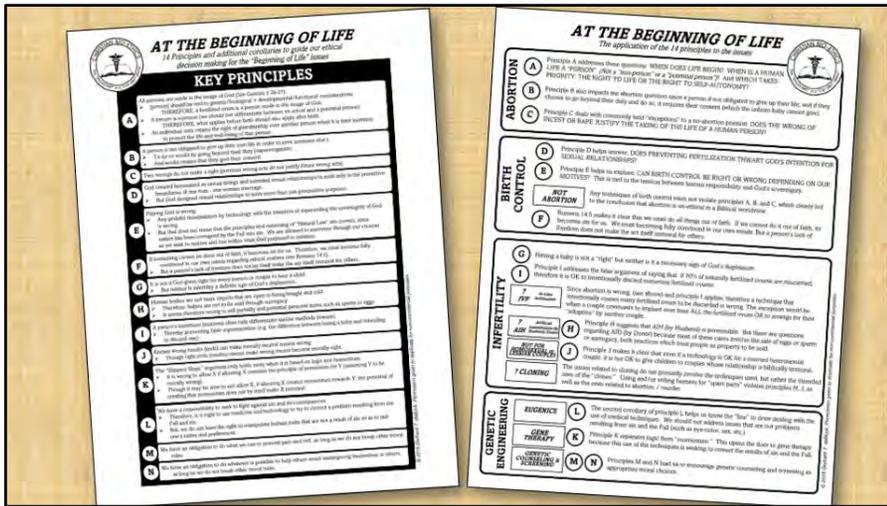
TR: ... ranging from physical health in general, to ...



4

... end of life issues

TR: To ...



5

... beginning of life issues.

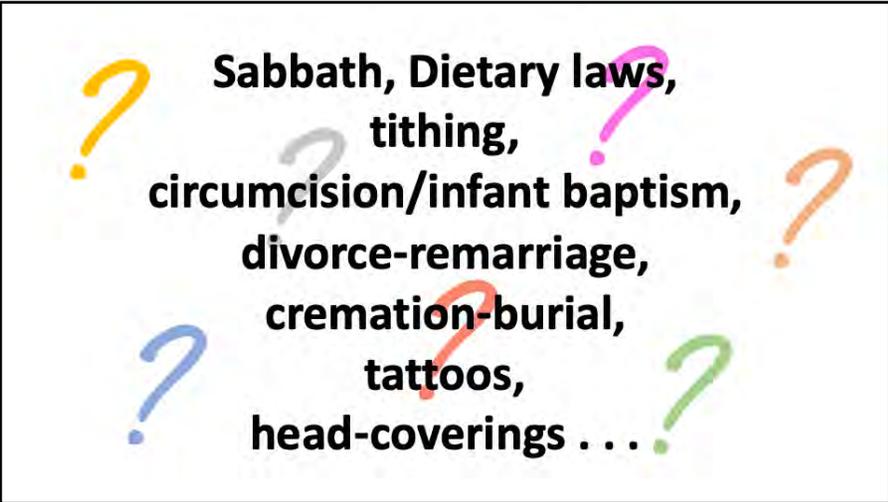
TR: We also went into the controversial waters of ...



Who are we to judge?

. . . sexual ethics, wrestling with . . . READ SLIDE
-- We unashamedly declared what the Bible clearly teaches . . .
while reminding ourselves that we are to judge those who claim
to be Christ-followers within the church, not outsiders.
-- And all of this must be done taking the log out of our own eye
first.

TR: We they went to the common questions of how to apply the
Mosaic law . . .



**Sabbath, Dietary laws,
tithing,
circumcision/infant baptism,
divorce-remarriage,
cremation-burial,
tattoos,
head-coverings . . .**

I realized that I had taken on too much.

TR: So, I only dealt with the specific of the Sabbath after helping us see the biblical case for . . .



**We are not “under”
the Mosaic Law anymore**



**We are under the
Law of Christ**

8

. . . making sure we put these great truths into our theology box .

.. READ SLIDE

-- Originally, I had planned to address the other specifics that people often ask about.

TR: But I sensed that the Lord wanted me to make sure we wrestled with this question first . . .

**What am I supposed to do when we
don't agree about how to apply the
Scriptures?**

READ SLIDE

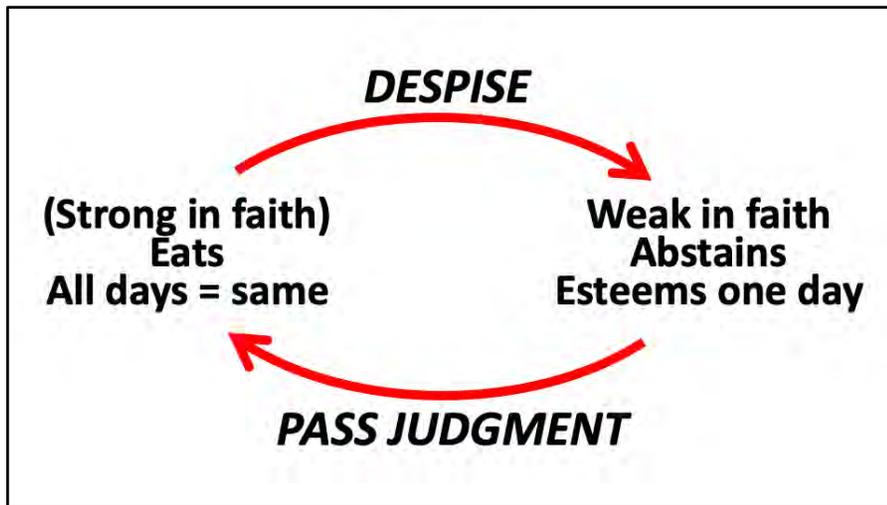
**TR: While not all disagreements have participants that fall into
these two categories . . .**

(Strong in faith)
Eats
All days = same

Weak in faith
Abstains
Esteems one day

. . . they are used in the Scriptures often enough that we need to carefully consider them . . . READ SLIDE

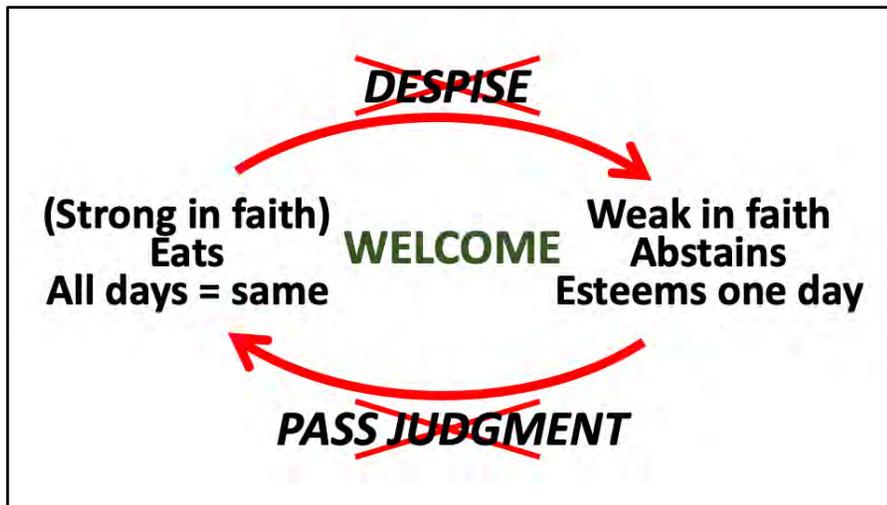
TR: The unfortunate way we look at others in the “other” category (though we may be on one side or the other on various issues) . . .



11

- . . . is that the strong DESPISE the weak.**
- And the weak PASS JUDGMENT on the strong.**
- The person with a sense of freedom in Christ looks down on the one who they consider overly sensitive and even legalistic.**
- The individual who is scrupulous about activities that they believe reflect holiness, judge others who don't do as they do, or do what they would never do, to be playing fast and loose with holiness.**

TR: What does the Bible tell us to do?



12

We are told **NOT** to despise and **NOT** to pass judgment. But rather, to **WELCOME** them.

TR: We must ask the Holy Spirit to examine us today, considering questions like these . . .

Are we DESPISING those who we think are overly-sensitive and even legalistic?

Are we PASSING JUDGMENT on those who we think are playing fast and loose with the demands of holiness?

13

READ SLIDE

-- Do we despise people who seem to be “black and white” thinkers . . . overly simplistic . . . not truly understanding the Gospel?

-- Do we pass judgment as “professional weaker brothers”, trying to control others by saying that we are offended . . . even though we are not at all tempted to do as they are doing?

-- EX: Joe Aldrich – [professional weaker brother]

-- Do we pass judgment not as “weaker brothers” but as “more holy and committed brothers” . . . “who are really serious about their faith?”

TR: The issues that divide professing Christians are tricky. But the pathway God wants us to take will lead us on . . .



A Journey of Humility

14

READ SLIDE . . . Under the Word

TR: Let's look at the passage that the diagram in your sermon notes is based on.

Romans 14:1-2 - p. 1050 in handout Bibles

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ²One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

ESV

15

READ SLIDE

-- Welcome . . . not quarrel

-- Eat anything . . . only vegetables (beyond the Mosaic Law)

TR: V. 3

Romans 14:3-4

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, **for God has welcomed him.** ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

ESV

16

READ SLIDE (v. 3)

-- Not despise nor pass judgment . . . FOR God has welcomed him (therefore we are to welcome them)

READ SLIDE (v.4)

TR: v. 5

Romans 14:5-6

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. **Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.** ⁶The one who observes the day, observes it **in honor of the Lord**. The one who eats, eats **in honor of the Lord**, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains **in honor of the Lord** and gives thanks to God.

ESV

17

READ SLIDE (first sentence)

-- contrast = esteems one day as better . . . all days alike

READ SLIDE (Each one should be . . .)

-- The motive behind the differing methods is the same . . . in honor of the Lord.

TR: v. 7

Romans 14:7-9

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

ESV

18

READ SLIDE

TR: v. 10

Romans 14:10-12

Why do you **pass judgment** on your brother? Or you, why do you **despise** your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." ¹²So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

ESV

19

Again, we see the two key things we must NOT do . . . READ SLIDE

TR: The rest of Romans 14 applies as well but we'll just look at a few highlights

Romans 14:14

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, **but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.**

ESV

20

In verse 14 . . . READ SLIDE

-- using CLEAN and UNCLEAR ties it back to the Mosaic Law

-- But since we are not under the Law . . . nothing is unclean . . . unless we think it unclean.

TR: v. 20 then addresses the strong in faith who understand that nothing is unclean in itself . . .

Romans 14:20

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, **but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.**

ESV

21

READ SLIDE

-- We might be in the right but still very wrong because we are violating the Law of Christ, the Law of love.

TR: Another highlight is verse 23, focused on those who are weak in faith on some matter of freedom . . .

Romans 14:23

But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. **For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.**

ESV

22

READ SLIDE

-- Just because we thinking something is right, doesn't make it so.
-- BUT, if we think something is wrong, that makes it wrong FOR US to do . . . because it does not proceed from faith.

TR: Earlier in the series I shared a couple important ah-ha's that I've had over the years . . .

Don't make absolute what the Bible doesn't make absolute!

Remember, unwise in our eyes is not necessarily sinful in God's eyes.

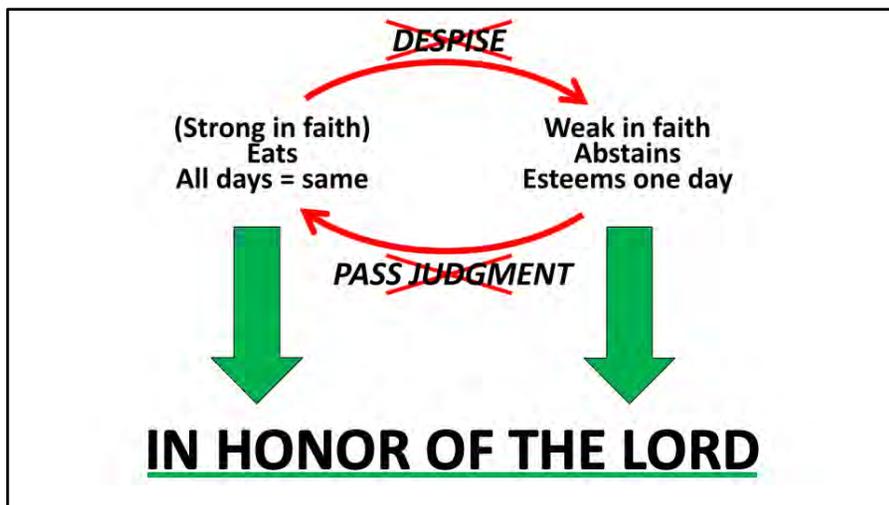
It is never safe to violate our consciences.

If we cannot do something out of faith, it is sin FOR US.

23

READ SLIDE

TR: With those ah-ha's in mind, let's jump back to the summary diagram in your worship fliers.



24

The reason we, if we are strong in faith, believing all foods are OK and all days the same . . .

-- OR weak in faith, believing we should abstain from certain foods and esteem some days as more holy than others . . .

-- we must not despise nor pass judgment.

-- For both groups can and should be doing (or not doing) **IN HONOR OF THE LORD.**

-- Not because it was what you grew up with, nor to be faddish, but for the glory of Jesus.

TR: What are we supposed to do when we disagree? Well . . .

**Instructions for those
who are “weak” in their faith . . .**

READ SLIDE

TR: I’m thinking of Galatians where there is a very strong warning to some who would have been classified as weaker brothers and sisters.

Galatians 4:9-11 – p.1076 in handout Bibles

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world,** whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰You observe days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

ESV

26

READ SLIDE

-- These were folks who esteemed some days as more holy than others.

TR: The Apostle Paul's warning gets even stronger in the next chapter . . .

Galatians 5:3-4

I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is **obligated to keep the whole law.** ⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

ESV

27

READ SLIDE

-- It seems the Apostle is addressing those who wanted to remain under the Mosaic law

-- But it also seems that some Gentiles were mixing in their own set of religious rules.

-- The great danger for the WEAK is that they will be severed from the Head, from Christ.

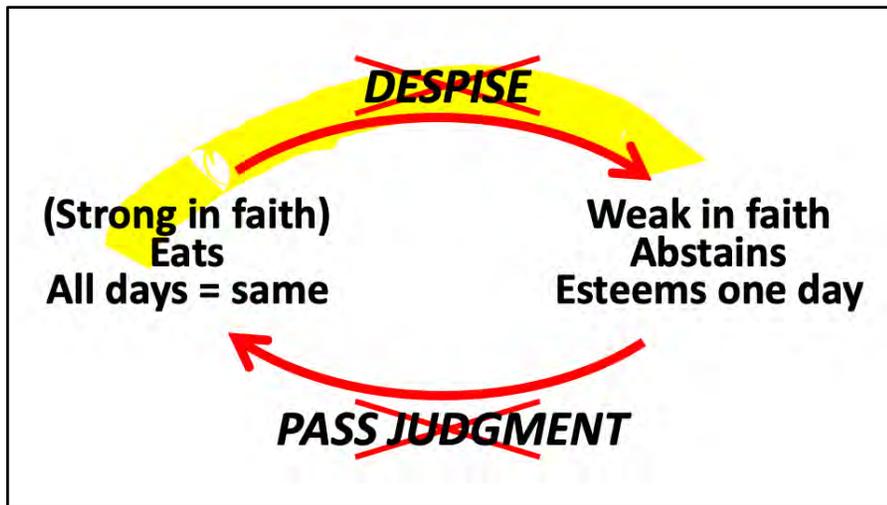
-- Paul is afraid he has labored over them in vain because they have fallen away from grace and into religion, believing we can keep the rules and do better and thereby deserve heaven and God's blessing.

TR: Two other passages came to mind . . .

**Further instructions for those
who are “strong” in their faith . . .**

these addressed the STRONG . . . the Bible gives . . . READ SLIDE

**TR: Two years ago we worked in detail through the passage in 1
Corinthians 10**



29

This passage underlines the importance of **NOT DESPISING** the one who has an honest sensitivity about participating in certain areas of freedom.

TR: The strong understand that . . .

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 – p. 1060 in handout Bibles

**"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up.
24Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.**

ESV

30

. . . all things are lawful.

-- This slogan, that seems to have been misused by the Corinthians, needed a bit of balance . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Down a few verses we have the specific case of eating food that had been offered to an idol and was later sold in the marketplace

1 Corinthians 10:28-29

But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— ²⁹I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience?

ESV

31

The person with greater sensitivity expresses that hesitation in their hearts to a person of strong faith.

-- Here it is not the Mosaic law specifically, but the past, pre-conversion experiences of the individual.

-- EX: Man who believed ALL men who wore their hair longer were in rebellion.

TR: Again the passage comes back to underline our previous diagram . . .

1 Corinthians 10:31-33

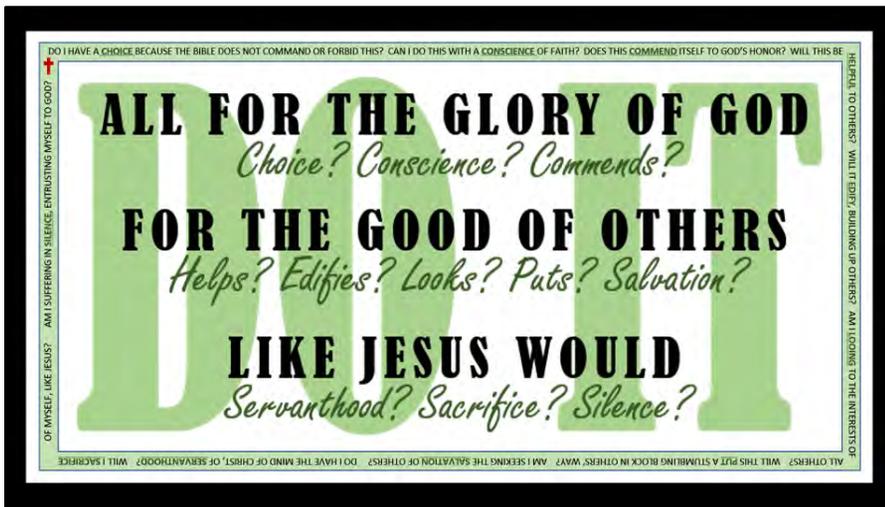
So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³²Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

ESV

32

. . . by keying into the honor of the Lord . . . doing it all to the glory of God . . . READ SLIDE

TR: In that message two years ago, I tried to summarize the principles in this passage . . .



33

... which I shared in poster form.

TR: As we DO IT ... READ SLIDE ... we must consider these questions ... especially in matters over which we know there are disagreements with others in the body of believers ...

**DO I HAVE A CHOICE BECAUSE THE BIBLE
DOES NOT COMMAND OR FORBID THIS?**

**CAN I DO THIS WITH
A CONSCIENCE OF FAITH?**

**DOES THIS COMMEND ITSELF
TO GOD'S HONOR?**

34

**These questions are found on the inside back cover of your
worship flier.**

-- READ SLIDE

**TR: Whether we would consider ourselves weak or strong, we
must ask ourselves . . .**

WILL THIS BE HELPFUL TO OTHERS?

WILL IT EDIFY, BUILDING UP OTHERS?

AM I LOOKING TO THE INTERESTS
OF ALL OTHERS?

WILL THIS PUT A STUMBLING BLOCK
IN OTHERS' WAY?

AM I SEEKING THE SALVATION OF OTHERS?

READ SLIDE

-- Paul broadens the application beyond just dealing with other professing Christians.

-- We must not miscommunicate the Gospel to others . . .

-- nor must we allow our quarreling to put a stumbling block in the way of others coming to Christ.

-- EX: Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul says *To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? (6:7)*

TR: That leads into the final three questions . . .

**DO I HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST,
OF SERVANTHOOD?**

**WILL I SACRIFICE OF MYSELF,
LIKE JESUS?**

**AM I SUFFERING IN SILENCE,
ENTRUSTING MYSELF TO GOD?**

36

READ SLIDE

TR: So the strong must not despise the weak, but at the same time . . .

**Further instructions for those
who are “strong” in their faith . . .**

. . . another passage gives us even further instruction

**TR: Colossians 2 begins with a warning about PASSING
JUDGMENT . . . but it is a warning to the strong not to allow the
weak to do so in a public forum . . .**

Colossians 2:16-17 – p.1087 in handout Bibles

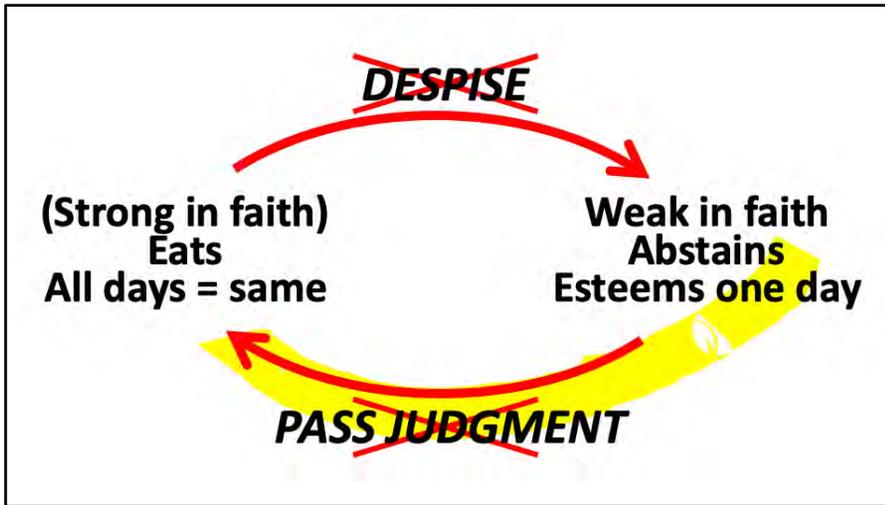
Therefore **let no one pass judgment** on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

ESV

38

READ SLIDE

TR: This could be an indirect correction to the weak . . .



... but it also prevents the strong from simplistically “giving in” to the scruples of those who are easily offended by things.

- The strong can push the weak to violate their consciences.
- The weak can manipulate the strong to give up freedoms in Christ for the ways of work-it-off religion.

TR: The text in Colossians continues . . .

Colossians 2:18-19

Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹and **not holding fast to the Head**, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

ESV

40

READ SLIDE

-- [asceticism]

-- The danger of making absolute what the Bible doesn't make absolute is that once you begin you don't know where to stop.

-- Holding fast to all those rules will make us like the Pharisees, whom Jesus called "white-washed tombs."

-- The danger for the those who grab on to their sensitives with an iron fist . . . is that they will let go of Jesus.

TR: Paul's warning goes on . . .

Colossians 2:20-22

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—²¹"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"²²(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?

ESV

41

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 23

Colossians 2:23

These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

ESV

42

READ SLIDE

- When we go beyond what is written in the Bible . . .**
- when we allow our desire to have all of theology to fit into a box, with the lid snugly closed . . .**
- when we allow spiritual disciplines, especially of “simplicity”, to become rules and demands . . .**
- . . . we promote self-made religion.**

TR: As we head into next week’s message, with specific answers for lots of specific questions, we must make it a journey of humility that realizes . . .

**DIE FOR
DIVIDE OVER
DEBATE
DECIDE**

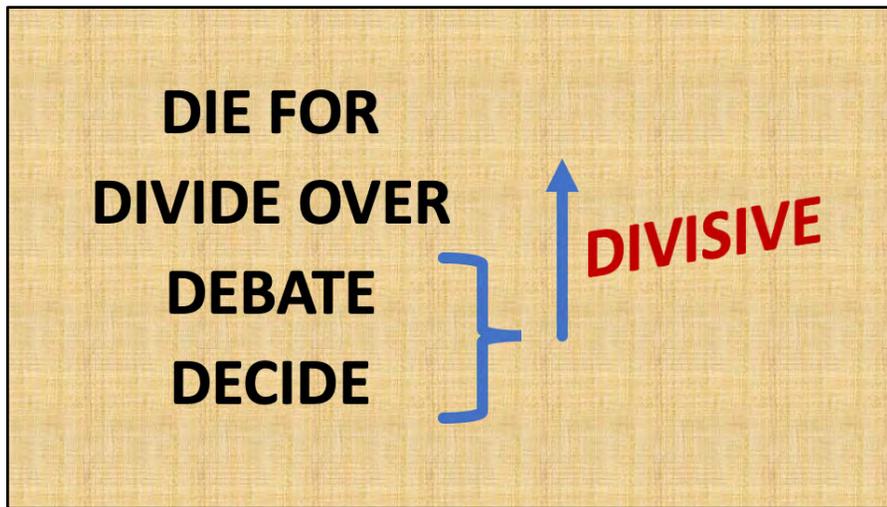
43

. . . not every issue is at the same level.

-- Someone said that there are four levels of disagreement.

-- The EFCA with its “major on the majors and minor on the minors” core value . . . might only have three . . . suggesting we should only divide over that which we would die for.

TR: Either way, what makes for the rancor and bitterness we see between professing believers so often?



We are tempted to . . . READ SLIDE

-- In other words, we make something “absolute” that the Bible doesn’t clearly do so.

-- If you want to know what I’d die for . . . read the EFCA statement of faith.

-- As a fellowship we will have to decide whether we will adopt the change from “the personal, bodily, premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ” . . . to “personal, bodily, glorious return”

-- I am a premillennialist . . . everyone in the conference had to be as well . . . but what they are saying is that it is not a “die for” or a “divide over” issue.

TR: So, let’s ask ourselves some questions . . .

Am I treating something as an absolute SIN, even though the Bible does not specifically and clearly say so?

45

READ SLIDE

TR: In these gray areas, areas that call for wisdom but are not directly or clearly addressed in the Bible, we must be very careful

...

Am I treating something as an absolute SIN, even though the Bible does not specifically and clearly say so?

Or, is it a “judgment call” and I have decided that I get to be the judge?

46

. . . not to make a “judgment call” to become a matter of black and white, right or wrong.

-- We must not be those who pretend to be wearing the stripes and carrying the whistle when we are not . . . that is arrogance.

-- For example: Getting married without going through pre-marital preparation . . . is unwise, but not sinful. The Elders made a policy long ago that no person empowered to officiate weddings under the name of Trinity Fellowship be allowed to do so without the couple going through our program or one comparable.

TR: Another question to ask ourselves . . .

**Am I being divisive by raising a
“decide” or “debate” issue
to the level of
“divide over” or “die for”?**

47

READ SLIDE

TR: The final question takes us right back to our diagram from Romans 14 . . . when it comes to the matters that I disagree with others about . . .

Am I despising others?

Am I passing judgment on others?

READ SLIDE

-- To not allow the “professional weaker brothers” to undermine the Gospel, while welcoming as brothers those who honestly have a sensitivity in certain areas . . . is very challenging.

TR: It will require us all to bow the knee to Jesus on this . . .



A Journey of Humility

49

READ SLIDE