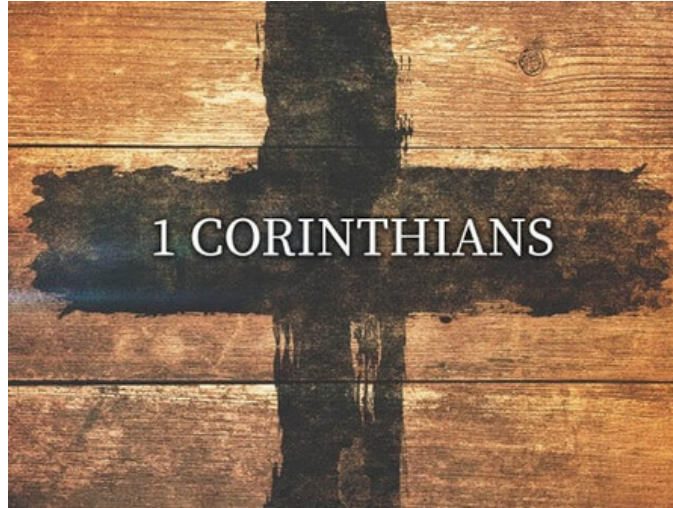


# CCLEB SERMON

## NOTES

SUNDAY AUGUST 25, 2024  
1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-33

PASTOR MILES DISSINGER



This morning, we will be going through the second half of the 10th chapter of 1st Corinthians. Pastor Duane led us through the first half of this chapter last week, so let's do a quick recap of where we have come from before we get into today's verses.

Chapter 10 of 1st Corinthians deals with the issue of eating meat that was sacrificed to idols at the pagan temples. Chapters 8 and 9 also deal with this issue. Ultimately, this comes down to idol worship... after all, that is why there were animals being sacrificed at the pagan temples in the first place.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth, giving them warnings about what happened to the Israelites in the past who put God to the test. He makes it clear that they must learn from history so that history doesn't repeat itself.

**1 Corinthians 10: 6-7**, "These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did."

**1 Corinthians 10: 9-11**, "Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age."

Paul is reminding the believers in Corinth of the consequences of chasing after evil and worshiping idols, and then he reminds them that they should learn from the written history of the Israelite people. Paul is saying, "This has happened before, and it didn't end well for the Israelites then... and it won't end well for you now."

I love history. I have always been someone who enjoys studying history. And I think learning from the mistakes of the past is absolutely crucial for any society if they don't want to repeat those failures. The same was true for the church in Corinth, and that is what Paul was trying to show them. He was giving them a history lesson to remind them that if they don't learn from the past... they will repeat it... and they DO NOT want to repeat that history.

Paul says in **verse 9** that we shouldn't put God to the test. And Pastor Duane taught us last week that we put God to the test when we fail to release our evil desires to the Lord, when we overlook our sinful nature as if the Lord will also overlook it. When we do that, we are basically putting the pressure on God to decide when enough is enough. And Paul is reminding the Corinthian church that at some point, God will have had enough.

Paul also made it clear that just because they are believers, it does not mean that they won't be tempted in the same ways that everyone else is tempted. Just because we give our lives to the Lord, it does not mean that things will automatically get easier. When we come to Christ... WE CHANGE. But it doesn't mean that the world changes. In fact... when we come to Christ, the world—the sinful, fallen world—will hate us even more. So we should expect the same temptations we experienced before we gave our lives to the Lord.

But Paul also reminds them that God will never abandon them in their temptation. Pastor Duane made this point, and I think it's worth repeating this morning: The most effective way of overcoming temptation is to surrender our evil desires to the Lord BEFORE the temptation!

Recognize the areas where you struggle... those things that the enemy can use to derail you... and surrender those things to God now... before they can be used to continue to distract you.

Ultimately, as Pastor Duane said last week... Paul is using this chapter to challenge the thinking of the church in Corinth because changed thinking results in changed actions. This entire chapter really could be summed up with that one word... surrender. We need to surrender our lives to God—our wants, our desires, and sometimes our freedoms—so that we will not cause other believers to stumble in their walk.

That brings us to the second half of this chapter. Before we dive in, let's again explore, very quickly, the background of what Paul is speaking about in these passages.

In Corinth, as in most other cities in the Roman Empire, there were temples set up for the worship of pagan gods... false gods. At these temples, animals were sacrificed, and then banquets were held to honor those pagan gods. People would gather to break bread, drink, and honor these false gods. The meat that was left over would then be sold to the public at the markets. So, that is a very basic picture of what Paul is addressing in our verses today.

**1 Corinthians 10: 14 - 18**, "So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. You are reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if what I am saying is true. When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren't we sharing in the body of Christ? And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body. Think about the people of Israel. Weren't they united by eating the sacrifices at the altar?"

In this very first line, Paul is setting the tone for the believers he is addressing. He makes it extremely clear that the church in Corinth should have absolutely nothing to do with these feasts set up to worship and honor the pagan gods. In fact... they should flee from it... run from it.

It reminds me of what Paul said about sexual sin in **chapter 6:18**, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body."

Paul said the believer should run from sexual sin, and he is saying the same thing here about idol worship at the pagan temples.

In the original text, the words Paul uses indicate that he is talking specifically about the idol worship happening at the pagan temples. But... we can certainly take his words in a broader sense as well.

It can be very easy for us to create idols in our lives if we are not careful. So quickly, something as simple as work, money, a certain hobby, or even something good like working out and being healthy can become an idol that we begin to worship if we don't have our eyes fully open.

Be on the lookout for those things in your life that can take your eyes off of God and quickly turn into idols. There is nothing wrong at all with any of the things that I listed... until they become the place that you "worship"... the things your life becomes about... when they take the place of God in some way. So Paul says, "Run away from the idol worship at the pagan temples... have nothing to do with it."

And then he goes on to tell the believers in Corinth WHY they should flee.

**1 Corinthians 10: 15-18**, "You are reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if what I am saying is true. When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren't we sharing in the body of Christ? And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body. Think about the people of Israel. Weren't they united by eating the sacrifices at the altar?"

There were some pride issues in the Corinthian church, and one of the things they prided themselves on was their "wisdom." So I love how Paul starts off in **verse 15**: "You guys think you are so wise... just look at what I'm telling you for yourselves and see if it's true." I love that tactic! Paul was good! He says, "I just gave you a history lesson on what has happened in the past... go look it up... do your own research and see." The church in Corinth must run from the worship of idols if they don't want their lives to end up like their forefathers, whose lives were brought to ruin by the worship of false gods.

Paul elaborates his position in the next verses by reminding them that when believers come together and break the bread and share the cup... when they come together in communion... they are engaging in a closeness with God, unified with Jesus. So, in the same way, if they eat at the pagan temples and share in the banquet set out to honor the pagan gods, they are sharing in a unity and closeness with the pagan gods as well.

Guzik said it this way in his commentary:

"Just as the Christian practice of communion speaks of unity and fellowship with Jesus, so these pagan banquets, given in the honor of idols, spoke of unity with demons who took advantage of misdirected worship. To eat at a pagan temple banquet was to have fellowship at the altar of idols."

In **verse 18**, Paul references the Israelites of old... "Think about the people of Israel. Weren't they united by eating the sacrifices at the altar?"

Back in the day, the Israelite people would gather at the altar of the Lord, consume the sacrificed meat, and share in fellowship with God and each other. Scholars equate this time around the altar in the Old Testament as being similar to the communion that Jesus institutes in the New Testament, which we now share together—a time of reconciliation, closeness, unity, and fellowship with the Lord.

The point Paul is making here is that followers of Christ—believers in the one TRUE God—should not participate in fellowship and closeness with any other false gods, namely the idols at the pagan temples in Corinth.

Paul then goes on to clarify what he is saying...

**1 Corinthians 10: 19 - 22**, “What am I trying to say? Am I saying that food offered to idols has some significance, or that idols are real gods? No, not at all. I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don’t want you to participate with demons. You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord’s Table and at the table of demons, too. What? Do we dare to rouse the Lord’s jealousy? Do you think we are stronger than he is?”

Paul is again very quick to make the distinction here that he does not recognize the idols at the pagan temples as real gods. He says they have no significance. They are what they are... false!

Remember what Paul said earlier in **chapter 8 verse 4**, “So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God.”

What Paul is saying is that the demons, who are very real, use these false gods to distract people away from the one TRUE God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Because of this, followers of Christ should have nothing to do with these celebrations. Perhaps the believers in Corinth, in all their wisdom, believed that since the idols were not real, they could just eat what they wanted, wherever they wanted. No big deal, right?

Paul affirms that the idols are completely false gods, not to be recognized, but opens their eyes to the motivation of those doing the sacrificing at these temples. The people doing the sacrificing believed very much that these idols were indeed real gods, and a follower of Christ should give no credence to those false beliefs.

They should flee from these gatherings. They should have no interaction or participation with these demons so that they are not distracted or deceived.

Perhaps the believers in Corinth thought that since they participate in communion with the one TRUE God, Jesus Christ, they are safe to consume this meat because they are covered with protection from the Lord. But Paul says that the believers in Corinth can’t do both. They disgrace God by sitting at the table of pagan gods.

**1 Corinthians 10: 21-22**, “You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord’s Table and at the table of demons, too. What? Do we dare to rouse the Lord’s jealousy? Do you think we are stronger than he is?”

Football season is fast approaching, and I could equate this to being a diehard Philadelphia Eagles fan. You live and die with each snap every Sunday. Do we have any diehard Eagles fans here today? Well, let me ask you this: can someone be a diehard Eagles fan and also be a diehard Cowboys fan??? NO!

Exactly! Paul is saying that you cannot sit at the Lord’s table, have communion and fellowship with Him, and then also sit at the table of false gods and demons and have fellowship with them as well. (and no, I am not trying to say that the Cowboys and their fans are evil. It’s close, but maybe misguided and deceived...)

And then, in **verse 22**, Paul reminds them again of the history lesson he already gave in the first half of **chapter 10**. He says, “Do we dare to rouse the Lord’s jealousy? Do you think we are stronger than he is?”

Meaning... “Do you really want to suffer the same fate as the Israelites of old? Do you think you can withstand the wrath of God?” The Corinthian culture was full of temptation, evil, and distraction, as we explored earlier in this book. Paul knew that fact and wanted to take this opportunity to remind them again that they must be hyper-vigilant not to walk down a road that will lead them astray.

As most of us know, it doesn't take too many steps down the wrong road for us to be drawn in, for us to become lost on a path that God never intended for us to walk in the first place. Paul is again giving a warning to the believers in Corinth not to be deceived into taking steps down a path that could lead them astray.

After Paul makes that very important distinction, he gets down to what I believe is really the main theme of this teaching...

**1 Corinthians 10: 23-24**, "You say, "I am allowed to do anything" —but not everything is good for you. You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is beneficial. Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others."

Now, if you have been joining us since we first started studying the book of Corinthians, then that first verse—**verse 23**—should sound familiar to you. Paul used that exact same wording in chapter 10 when addressing sexual sin in the Corinthian church. "I am allowed to do anything"... This was a "slogan" used by the people of Corinth to justify behavior, and in the Greek, it translates to "all things are lawful."

And just as he did in chapter 10, Paul adds a tagline to the slogan:  
"I am allowed to do anything"... BUT... not all things are good for you.  
"I am allowed to do anything"... BUT... not all things are beneficial.

I get the sense that the Christians in Corinth were sort of like me when I was a young guy. They pushed the envelope. They tried to see how much they could get away with before they would get into real trouble. And Paul is saying that sometimes, even though something may be permitted, that doesn't mean it is the right thing to do, and he skillfully uses language that they would connect with by altering a well-known slogan of their culture.

Then Paul hammers on what I believe to be the real theme of our passages today—and that is **verse 24**, "Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others."

Paul has walked the believers in Corinth through a history lesson of what happened to the Israelites of the past when they worshiped idols and did not keep their eyes fixed on the Lord. He explains to them why they should avoid the feasts at the pagan temples that bring honor to the idols of the land, so they themselves are not deceived and distracted.

But now Paul gives another reason why the believers should pay close attention to their own actions. This reason has nothing to do with themselves but with their brothers and sisters around them. Paul is saying, "You may be able to lawfully do this or that. You may even be able to do this or that and be okay in the eyes of God. But if it can cause a brother or sister to stumble, then you should put their good above your own." We should surrender our rights for the good of our brothers and sisters, especially and most importantly when our choices or actions could cause confusion or cause them to stumble in their walk.

This is such a valuable lesson for us to learn as well. We should judge our behavior by the standard of how it will affect our brothers and sisters around us.

We must each decide if any of our actions could cause a hiccup in another believer's life. We should all be examining that in our own lives on a regular basis.

I bet if we searched hard enough, we might find something in our own walk that we could take a second look at and reexamine through the lens that Paul is talking about here in **verse 24**, "Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others."

Paul finishes chapter 10 by further explaining his position, specifically using the issue of meat sacrificed to idols at the pagan temples.

And his next statement might surprise you a little... **1 Corinthians 10: 25-26**, "So you may eat any meat that is sold in the marketplace without raising questions of conscience. For the earth is the LORD's, and everything in it."

Ok, so Paul just finished saying how these banquets at the pagan temples brought about fellowship with demons and should be avoided completely. Now he is saying that you can eat ANY meat sold in the marketplace and not worry about it.

So how can that be? Doesn't that go against what Paul just said in the previous verses? Well, let's dive into that...

What Paul is alluding to here is that the issue is not the meat itself. The issue is the fellowship with demons that happens at the temple during the banquets. There is nothing inherently wrong with the meat itself.

Paul even quotes **Psalms 24:1**, "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it."

God made the cow that was sacrificed. It was His when it was alive, and it is still His now that it's hanging in the market. Paul is saying that there is no curse or hex on the meat when it is being sold in the public market. It's just meat.

So when you go and purchase meat at the market, some of it may have been used in these banquets at the pagan temples, and some may not have been. Paul is saying, don't even ask if it was sacrificed to idols because it doesn't really matter in the grand scheme of things. If it doesn't bother you, then just buy what you need and eat it without asking questions. Remember, the issue was not the meat; the real issue was the fellowship with evil that was happening at these feasts. That is a very important distinction that Paul is making. But Paul quickly comes back to some guidelines to help his brothers and sisters navigate these situations...

Let's look at our next verses... **1 Corinthians 10: 27-30**, "If someone who isn't a believer asks you home for dinner, accept the invitation if you want to. Eat whatever is offered to you without raising questions of conscience. (But suppose someone tells you, "This meat was offered to an idol." Don't eat it, out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you. It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person.) For why should my freedom be limited by what someone else thinks? If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why should I be condemned for eating it?"

Ok...there is a lot there...so let's unpack this one thing at a time.

First...**verse 27**, "If someone who isn't a believer asks you home for dinner, accept the invitation if you want to. Eat whatever is offered to you without raising questions of conscience."

The first thing to note here is that Paul doesn't condemn eating with non-believers. You might easily gloss over that in these verses, but I think it's worth noting! You may be the only Bible your non-believing friends ever hear, so use those interactions wisely!

Ok, Paul says that if you share a meal with a non-believer, just eat what they give you. Obviously, the non-believer isn't concerned about where the meat came from, and if you aren't concerned if the meat came from a temple feast, there is absolutely no reason to bring it up or think about it. Eat and enjoy!

Now let's look at verses 28 and the first half of 29... **1 Corinthians 10: 28-29a**, "(But suppose someone tells you, "This meat was offered to an idol." Don't eat it, out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you. It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person.)"

Ok, let's first deal with this word "conscience" that Paul uses in these verses. I want to go back to chapter 8 again and read verses 4-9...

**1 Corinthians 8: 4-9**, "So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. But for us,

There is one God, the Father,  
by whom all things were created,  
and for whom we live.  
And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
through whom all things were created,  
and through whom we live.

However, not all believers know this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. It's true that we can't win God's approval by what we eat. We don't lose anything if we don't eat it, and we don't gain anything if we do. But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble."

Paul brings it right back to what he said in **verse 24**: "Don't be concerned for your own good, but for the good of others."

Paul is saying that if you are eating somewhere, and someone else says that the meat was sacrificed to idols, refrain from eating it. Clearly, if someone feels it necessary to mention that the meat was sacrificed to idols, it bothers them. It violates their conscience. So Paul says, in that case, don't eat it. (**verse 29**) "It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person." Be concerned for the good of the other person.

So the whole thing really comes down to the conscience of the one eating the meat. And that's what Paul says in the second half of verse 29 and verse 30...

**1 Corinthians 10: 29b-30**, "For why should my freedom be limited by what someone else thinks? 30 If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why should I be condemned for eating it?"

Now, the way these verses lay out, it may feel like Paul is contradicting himself here, but he really isn't. He is repeating that a believer has the freedom to eat the meat if it doesn't violate their conscience or another believer's conscience around them. If the believer understands that the meat is just meat—and nothing else—and everyone else is okay with it, then go ahead!

He also indicates that if a brother or sister can eat the meat from the pagan temple feasts at their own private table with a clear conscience, then don't condemn them for it. It really comes down to individual believers and their own consciences about this particular situation. But what Paul is really teaching here is that when these situations arise, default to the weaker conscience. If there is someone among you who objects, then you just don't do it. Default to the weaker conscience. We sometimes use that tactic as an elder team when making a decision that is split down the middle. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, we often default to the more sensitive conscience. It's biblical.

David Guzik said, "Paul is being very consistent according to one principle: liberty within the limits of love. We have freedoms as believers, but we should be prepared to surrender those freedoms at times when it may cause another believer to stumble in their walk. And we do that out of love for each other and love for God... to honor Him."

Paul could have used the Corinthian slogan again and said it this way: “I am allowed to do anything, but not everything will bring honor and glory to God.” And in reality, that is the ultimate goal in the life of a believer—to honor God in all we do.

And with that, let’s close this out with our final verses from chapter 10...

**1 Corinthians 10: 31 - 11:1**, “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Don’t give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God. I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don’t just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved. **1** Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

Here’s the reality, guys: The purpose of every believer is to bring honor and glory to God with the lives that we live. It is to point people to Jesus through our actions. As I said earlier, the Corinthians lived lives with the mindset of how much they could get away with and still remain on the right side of God. That should NEVER be our thinking as followers of Jesus. Our mindset should instead be: How can I bring honor to my God through the things that I have to do today? Everything we do in our daily lives—from the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep—we should be thinking about how our actions and interactions can point to the Lord.

Paul then says, “Don’t give offense to Jews or Gentiles, or the church of God.” What he means here is: don’t allow your life and the things you engage in to be a reason that ANYONE—believer or nonbeliever (Jew or Gentile)—goes down a road they should not go down. Don’t lead people into sin. Be aware of your actions and your choices and how they might be perceived by those around you.

As followers of Christ, people are always watching us. And we must remain vigilant to be a shining example of Christ to the best of our abilities. Paul says as much in our last verse today: **1 Corinthians 11:1** – “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

Our lives need to be a mirror that points people to Jesus. When they look at us, they should see the characteristics of Christ. And even as I say that out loud, I realize again how incredibly difficult that is. The Bible never says that being a disciple of Christ will be easy, but I think one of the hardest responsibilities that we take on as Christians is to always point others to Christ.

**1 John 2:6** says this.. “Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.”

And then Paul finishes with what I believe is the principle from these verses that we should apply to everything we do.

Paul says, “I don’t just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.”

We already know that we should focus on the good of others, surrendering our own freedoms and rights when needed, but Paul now gives the reason why: **SO THAT MANY MAY BE SAVED.**

Those words should be applied to all we do. We are called to live our lives as Jesus did. And why did Jesus come? To save many.

Paul is reminding the church in Corinth that the most important thing they can do for those around them is to lead them to salvation. And the most important thing we can do is point those around us to Christ. Paul’s motivation is the Gospel—and saving lives for eternity.



So how can we apply what we have read in these verses to our lives today?

Well, I don't think many of us are wondering if the sliced roast beef we're buying at the deli counter at Giant has been sacrificed to idols—although it may cross my mind the next time. But there are a couple of other very important takeaways from today's passages.

1. Examine your day-to-day life to see if there is anything you are doing that may cause another believer to stumble.

Is there something that you participate in, a hobby, or a habit that you have, that could lead another believer down a path of sin?

Does the Bible say that we should never drink alcohol? No, it does not. You are permitted to drink alcohol. Now, the Bible does warn against excesses, but you have the right to drink alcohol. But can your use of alcohol cause a brother or sister to stumble in their walk? Yes, it can. Be aware of that.

Yoga—and maybe I use this example because I am jealous of anyone who can stretch enough to touch their toes—has poses that are designed to honor false gods. Some of the foundational principles of yoga are to open your mind to enlightenment in a false religion. I know a lot of believers who are stumbled by yoga. Just something to think about.

Or is there something you have surrounded yourself with that might cause someone to question or stumble? I remember Thom telling a story of a time when he and Sue were out West and bought a dreamcatcher. They had it in their house and really liked it. It was handmade, and those things are quite beautiful. But when they realized it had “spiritual” connections to Native American tribes, they took it down and got rid of it because if someone visited their home and saw it hanging there, it could cause them to stumble or question.

Are there things in your life that you have overlooked for years that you could look at through a different lens and reexamine?

**1 Corinthians 10: 23-24**, “You say, ‘I am allowed to do anything’ —but not everything is good for you. You say, ‘I am allowed to do anything’—but not everything is beneficial. Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others.”

The point is this: We need to be constantly looking inward and always aware of how our actions might cause another believer around us to stumble or question. We must be ready to sacrifice a right in order to protect each other.

2. And this is the big takeaway for me from today's lesson: Let ALL we do point to Jesus with the intent of saving souls for eternity.

Paul said, “I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.”

I want to challenge each one of us here today to take a new look at our daily lives through the lens of saving souls. This might be a perspective that some of us have never considered before.

We aren't all called to be evangelists. We have some very gifted evangelists at this church, but it is not everyone's gift. That being said, we can all point to Christ and salvation simply by imitating Christ in our daily lives, as Paul did. And let me tell you this: in the hateful world that we live in, when people see the characteristics of Christ, they notice.

The characteristics of Christ are attractive. They draw people. Even those who don't know Christ are attracted to the characteristics of Christ. When we imitate Christ, people will see those characteristics and be drawn to them.

So focus on your day-to-day life. Focus on your interactions with others, your responses to situations, and your words and reactions. I have no doubt that all of us have ample opportunities to imitate Christ throughout our days. Pray that God would give you the awareness and ability to respond as Jesus would in every interaction.

And most importantly, pray that God would reveal to you the areas where you can improve with this goal in mind...

"I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved."

**So that many may be saved.**