

Church Gone Wild: Week 8

## Food & Weakness

1 Corinthians 8

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### The issue: eating idol meat or not

#### 1 Corinthians 8:1

Pagan worship in Corinth included a barbeque. The meat would be prepared at the temple, barbecued to the god and what was left over would be eaten by the worshippers.

In pagan worship, the meat was divided into three parts:

- 1) Meat that would be burned to the god
- 2) Meat that was eaten by the worshippers
- 3) Meat that was laid on "the table of the god."

The meat left on the god's table would be later sold in the local market. The Corinthian Christians wrestled with this question: *Should Christians eat idol meat or not?*

Some thought it was ok for them to eat idol meat because they had the right knowledge about idols.

Before Paul deals with the meat, he deals with their hearts.

Knowledge is not the primary motivation for how we act as Christians. Knowledge when left alone makes us puffed up with pride. Love is our primary motivation.

#### 1 Corinthians 8:2-3

Love comes before knowledge in our priority list. Loving God demonstrates that we are known by God.

#### 1 Corinthians 8:4

We all agree that idols have no real existence and there is only one God. These are statements from the Corinthians' letter to Paul. He is in agreement.

#### 1 Corinthians 8:5-6

There are many "gods," in that there are many religions and cults that proclaim a god or many gods.

Yet for us, we believe in one God – Father, Son & Spirit.

"I know that and you know that, but some people don't know."

#### 1 Corinthians 8:7

Some of the Christians in Corinth used to go to the pagan temple and eat barbeque as a part of worship. Even though they know the one true God, meat sacrificed to idols is still associated with that pagan god. Their conscience has been defiled.

Conscience is a "moral referee" that announces the rightness or wrongness of your actions (Gordon Fee). Everyone is born with a conscience and it is developed or dulled by education and experience.

A Christian who used to eat idol meat at the pagan barbeque would have all sorts of yellow flags flying around in their head if they were to eat meat sacrificed to an idol.

#### 1 Corinthians 8:8

Eating certain foods, and restricting others, does not make you more or less spiritual. (Example: vegetarian, no pork, etc.)

#### 1 Corinthians 8:9

The Corinthians who knew they were free to eat meat, and that the idols were meaningless, felt like they had a right to eat whatever they wanted.

Paul doesn't disagree with their right, but he wants their actions to be motivated by love for those with a weak conscience. By a weak conscience, Paul means that their conscience had not been fully developed.

#### 1 Corinthians 8:10-11

Some in the church were going to the god's table at the temple to eat the pagan barbeque, which would have destroyed the faith of a weaker person.

### **1 Corinthians 8:12**

It may not be a sin to eat pagan barbeque, but it is a sin to wound the conscience of a weaker Christian.

### **1 Corinthians 8:13**

Bottom line: If anything messes up my brother's faith, I won't do it!

## **How do we decide if a certain activity is right or wrong?**

### **1) What does the Bible say?**

What knowledge do we have on the subject from the Scripture?

What is the clear teaching of the entire Scripture on this subject?

The Bible is our highest authority.

The Bible tells us what we *can* do.

If the Bible doesn't specifically and clearly address an issue then we have to look to other sources in addition to the teachings of Scripture.

### **2) What does the community of faith say?**

What do my Christian friends think?

What do the leaders of my church think?

The community is doing life together.

They can tell us what we *could* do.

It is better to keep your comments to yourself on issues not addressed in the Scripture unless you are directly asked by someone.

### **3) What does my conscience say?**

What does the moral referee inside of me think?

In what direction does my heart lean?

Your conscience is developed by the Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

Conscience tells us what we *should* do.

The Holy Spirit speaks through your conscience and it can change over time (e.g. race relations).

### **4) What does common sense say?**

Is there any kind of potential danger involved in this activity?

Would this be unhealthy for my body, my mind or my relationships?

Common sense needs to be filtered through biblical principles.

Common sense tells us what would be foolish to do.

We believe that all truth is God's truth no matter the source. Often common sense can come from medical science.

### **5) What do my moral weaknesses say?**

What will my weakness allow me to do?

What will pull me away from my relationship with God?

Your weaknesses can decrease over time, but they normally persist.

Weaknesses tell us what we cannot do.

Knowing your weaknesses and temptations forms a final line of defense in deciding whether or not an activity is permissible for you.

## **Issues to consider**

- 1) Alcohol
- 2) Tobacco
- 3) Music
- 4) Movies/Television
- 5) Food
- 6) Clothing
- 7) Birth control
- 8) Education
- 9) Money
- 10) Political affiliation



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