

SERMON STUDY SUMMARY

May 27/28, 2023

ROMANS SERIES Part 31: Glorifying God by Being Sensitive to One Another

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Despite our differences in disputable matters, we can remain unified in Christ if we truly love each other. Then together we can pursue the mission God has called us to.

Your conscience is partly God-given and partly learned. God has given you a conscience about things that are right or wrong. For other matters you have freedom to inform your conscience. If you feed your conscience with Biblical principles and precepts, then it will be a reliable guide. However, if you go against the Scriptures and/or rationalize away your behavior, your conscience will not serve as the guide God intended it to be.

The stumbling blocks to unity usually have to do with disputable matters, not with things that are clearly right or wrong. In the early church, disputable matters had to do with diet, drink and the right day to worship. Today, some of the issues are different, but, as we learned through the pandemic, they are nonetheless REAL and have the potential of dividing the church, weakening the impact of the church, and even blowing a church apart.

There are two types of weak Christians—those new to the faith, weak in Bible knowledge and weak in will power; and legalistic Christians who do not understand grace or freedom in Christ.

Paul asks us not to be a stumbling block to weak Christians. If a weak Christian does something against his conscience, even though the behavior itself is not morally wrong (v.14), he is sinning because faith has not informed his behavior. As Paul says, “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” (v.22). Strong or more mature Christians must not be flippant in exercising their freedom in Christ. If we truly are more mature in Christ, we will be sensitive to how our behavior effects others, especially weaker Christians. If we encourage weak Christians to go against their conscience, we’re influencing them to sin.

When we insist on exercising our freedom without concern for those newer to the faith,

- a) we are not acting in love.
- b) we may significantly set them back in their faith and stunt the future growth of their faith.
- c) we are focusing on secondary things instead of what really matters.

Even though you have a right to exercise your freedom in disputable matters, be sensitive to weaker or newer Christians around you. Have greater concern for their soul and their Christian growth than your right to exercise your freedom in some disputable area. When you’re not sure where someone stands on a disputable matter, respect him enough to ASK rather than pressuring him to go against his convictions.

In verse 16 Paul writes: “Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil.”

To the stronger Christian he’s saying: I plead with you to avoid anything which has the potential to hurt, divide or even destroy the work God wants to do through you. Be sensitive, bend over backwards if necessary, so as not to be a stumbling block to the weaker Christian.

To the weaker Christian Paul is saying: Don’t speak evil of someone who does something that you have convictions against, yet which Scripture considers to be morally neutral. By doing so, you rob another Christian of his joy and freedom in Christ.

When you don’t see eye to eye on disputable issues, learn to:

1. Accept one another. Don’t label others or question the sincerity of their faith in Christ.
2. Be sensitive to one another.
3. Stay focused on Jesus and on what really matters.

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Talk about an issue that divided a relationship, family, group, or church?
2. How do you strike a balance between holding firm to your personal convictions while respecting the differing viewpoints and practices of fellow believers?

UP – PURSUE GOD

Read Romans 14:13-23

3. What lessons can we learn from the early church's disputes over diet, days of worship, and drink? How do these issues parallel contemporary challenges within the church?
4. Pastor Henry talked about 2 types of weak Christians. Which type was this passage written for? What should our response be to each type of weak Christian?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. How can we effectively relate to individuals outside the church who have different worldviews or lifestyles from our own? What challenges have you seen or experienced?
6. Of the disputable matters mentioned in question 3, what steps can you take to build unity and encourage those you disagree with?

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

Jesus called the church to be in unity knowing that there would be many differing opinions and viewpoints. Consider those who agree with the essentials of faith but disagree with you on the non-essential issues. Do you hold disagreement against them? How can you pray and work to create unity rather than division? How can you reflect the heart of Jesus and bring glory to God?

THE WORD (NIV)

Romans 14:13-23

¹³ Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. ¹⁴ I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. ¹⁵ If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

¹⁹ Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. ²¹ It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

²² So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. ²³ But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

John 13:34

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

This week's writers: Elsa Henderson, David McMillin, Sandi Somers, Mark Eckstein, Jared Harrison, and Jorel Quemuel