

Discussion Questions Set #1

“Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God.” (1 Corinthians 8:1-3)

1. Paul draws a very specific line in the sand regarding how he views an over-focus on knowledge within the life of a follower of Jesus, suggesting that “knowledge puffs up”. Does this mean that knowledge is undesirable to the follower of Jesus? What do you think Paul means by the statement that “knowledge puffs up”?
2. What danger might exist if we live as though accumulated knowledge serves a protective, insulating function against sin, inoculating us against the influence of sin?
3. The second portion of Paul’s comment to the Corinthians here is that “love builds up”. What do you think Paul means by this? How might the follower of Jesus employ this verse to determine if love is actually present in a relationship?
4. How might love serve a better protective or insulating function against sin?
5. In sermon, it was suggested that we ought not be preoccupied with gathering knowledge about Jesus, rather we ought to be overwhelmingly concerned about the practical expression of love to those around us. Discuss this in light of your church experience? How well do we fit this bill?

Discussion Questions Set #2

“Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.” (1 Corinthians 8:7-9)

“Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. 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. 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 ... It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.” (Romans 14:13-15,21)

The Corinthians believed that knowledge meant the right to act in freedom – that is however they pleased - while for Paul, love means the free giving up of one’s rights for the sake of others. The first consideration in Christian conduct therefore is not how one’s own rights benefit oneself, but how they impact the good of others because our rights and freedoms are to be lived out in vibrant community!

1. Discuss Paul’s use of “weakness/weak” in this passage. What does he mean by labelling some as “the weak”?
2. Paul suggests here that food consumption has little bearing on one’s standing before God. This is a significant departure from a classic Hebrew position on clean/unclean foods. What do you think Paul is suggesting about the nature of our standing before God through this statement?
3. Ought Christians be more interested in the exercise of their rights or in the giving up of their rights for the benefit of others? What examples of either of these focusses have you seen in your experience? Do we live out our freedoms in vibrant community?
4. Discuss the countercultural nature of these texts. How do we, as followers of Jesus, honestly apply these texts in a world that seems so bent on a different understanding of rights and freedoms?
5. Paul is emphatic that the Corinthians to ensure that “the exercise of [their] rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak”. Why do you think Paul is so strongly set on such a teaching?
6. How might the exercise of a right be an unloving act? What considerations must we be ready to make as a follower of Jesus when it comes to the exercise of a right?