

1 CORINTHIANS

gospel formed freedom

DISCUSSION GUIDE

OVERVIEW FOR PART 3:

For the next three weeks we are going to ask the question: How should members of a gospel-shaped community exercise our Christian Freedom? It is true that if Jesus the Son sets you free, you are truly free. But how should we handle our freedom?

The tendency for all of us is to fall off one side or the other of the gospel horse. Some of us fall to the side of license, loving the freedom the gospel provides, but living without any regard to how it affects others. Some of us fall to the side of legalism, recognizing that sin really is bad since Jesus had to die for it, and in turn, restricting ourselves from ever getting close to sin by creating lists of additional laws and codes we must live by.

Both can tend to look down on the other's view of the Gospel and stand in judgement on one another as a result.

This was happening in the Corinthian church around many things. The particular issue Paul is addressing over the next three chapters is around eating meat sacrificed to idols.

In Corinth, meat was offered to a god in the form of a sacrifice. Some of the food was saved for those celebrating in and around the temple. The leftovers were sold in the marketplace.

We might not have to address the concern over eating meat sacrificed to idols, but we do need to ask the question regarding what we do with our biblical knowledge and the

freedom the gospel grants us. Especially when living in a context where the mantra of our culture is “I’m free...to do what I want...any ole’ time”.

In our context, people don’t tend to ask the question of “should” or “ought” – Should I do this? Should I consume this? Should I purchase this? Instead we ask the question of “can”. Can I do this? Can I consume this? Can I purchase this?

We don’t tend to think through the personal and collective implications for our actions as it relates to others. We primarily think about our own interests in making our decisions.

Paul addresses this concern addressing three questions: 1) How do we need to limit our freedoms for the sake of weaker or less-knowledgeable Christians? 2) How do we personally avoid idolatry while engaging in the practices of our culture? 3) How do we engage our Christian freedom for the good of those who don’t yet know Jesus?

PART 3: WEEK ONE The Freedom of Love

Text: 1 Corinthians 8

The more progressives Christians tried to make the case to Paul that they should be free to eat meat, while the others didn’t feel the freedom. Who is right?

Some of the Christians who were not as informed about their new freedom in Christ, felt guilty for eating meat if it had been sacrificed to an idol. Before coming to faith in Jesus they engaged in worship of false gods through eating sacrificial meat. Because they were new in their faith, they were still not free in their conscience to eat meat. Those who knew better wanted Paul to clear things up and give a carte blanche statement that it was always fine to eat the meat. Paul doesn’t comply as they hoped. He affirms their freedom while also clarifying that they should never use their freedom in ways that would cause others to sin.

While Paul affirms the theological truths that those with more knowledge appeal to, he also clarifies that true knowledge of God leads to loving one another in ways that build up. Those who understand what Jesus did to save us and make us part of God’s family would never want to do anything that would cause a brother or sister in Christ to stumble into sin. Our love for God compels us to limit our freedoms for the sake of

others just as Jesus did for us. He was the stronger brother who became weak for us, giving up his own rights at the cross so that we might be saved from sin and empowered to overcome it.

Read: 1 Corinthians 8

1. What can we learn about who God is and what God has done from these verses?
2. How should these truths affect how we understand who we are and how we love one another?
3. How should we apply these conclusions to our everyday lives?
4. What freedoms might we need to consider limiting for the sake of others?
5. What will we do as a result of our knowledge and love for one another?