

# 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 TWO Freedom from Idols**

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-22

God’s people throughout history share a bad habit – after God rescues them and sets them free, they quickly return to their slavery through serving other gods. Paul sees the church at Corinth repeating this broken pattern, so he reminds them of their family history. It’s a story of freedom and of slavery.

God rescues the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, provides for their needs, and gives them the ten commandments so that they can continue to live in this newfound freedom. The first thing he asks the Israelites to do is to not have any other gods before him. He knows that they will be truly free when they worship him alone.

However, the Israelites quickly turns away from God and begin worshipping other gods just like the nations around them. They make for themselves a golden calf, eat and drink in celebration of other gods, and engage in sexual immorality. It’s a downward spiral from there and at the heart of the problem is idolatry.

God made us with desires. He made those desires to be fulfilled in him and in his ways. Idolatry is when we look elsewhere to have those desires satisfied and walk in other ways. Paul saw the church in Corinth engaging in idolatry just like the people of Israel as they worshipped at pagan temples. He calls them out and exhorts them to “flee from idolatry.”

While we might not have golden calves or sacrifice meat to pagan gods, we all have idols in our lives. “Idolatry isn’t a choice between two gods; it is the attempt to serve many gods at the same time,” writes Stephen Um. Whenever we try and worship Jesus and other things in our lives, we are giving in to idolatry. All of us do this, whether it’s idolizing our careers, our kids, our relationships, or something else. This leads to us becoming divided people and keeps us from living in freedom.

What’s the way of escape from this broken pattern? Jesus. He forgives us for our failure and sets us free. All of our longings and desires are designed to lead us to Jesus, the one who ultimately satisfies the longings of our hearts. As we come home to him, we will experience the freedom that he died and rose to purchase for us.

### **Read: 1 Corinthians 10:1-22**

1. In your own words, how would you define idolatry?
2. Is there anything that stands out to you as you reflect on the history of idolatry in the lives of God’s people?
3. As you think about your life, where are you worshipping idols? What do you want more than anything? What are you afraid of losing?
4. What does worshipping these idols produce in your life?
5. How can Jesus satisfy what you’re looking for in these idols?
6. How can we together encourage one another to live in freedom from idolatry?