

Pastor Steve Viars
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“The Freedom of Worship”

1. Has God given us biblical truth regarding the way we should eat?
2. Does the Bible give us explicit instructions about exactly what foods to eat, and in what proportions?
3. Should Christians make identical eating choices?
4. Have people ever tried to place specific eating restrictions on the New Testament church?

Colossians 2:8 – See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Colossians 2:16-23 – Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

5. Have people ever abused their “eating freedoms”?

Galatians 5:13 – For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

6. So what should we do?

Enjoy the freedom but exercise it responsibly.

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New Testament worship should be characterized by great freedom and joy.

7. Understand the different kinds of biblical material.

a. In many places, God gives us direct commands in His Word.

b. In other places, God gives us general, indirect principles.

1 Corinthians 10:31 – Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Romans 12:2 – And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Philippians 1:10 – so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

c. In areas of life where there are no specific commands to help us make absolute choices, the Bible still gives important principles to guide the way we handle our liberties.

I. One of the Great Blessings of New Testament Christianity is Our Freedom in Christ.

A. Freedom from the power and penalty of sin.

John 8:32 – and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

B. Freedom from the law.

Galatians 5:1 – It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 3:1-3 – You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

C. Freedom from the blindness that plagues those who do not have a relationship with Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:17 – Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

D. The privilege to make choices within biblical buoys.

1 Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14

II. Our Freedoms Must Always Be Exercised and Enjoyed Within the Parameters of Biblical Principles.

Weak in the faith – someone whose conscience is triggered by criteria other than the Scriptures.

A. Don't judge one another in areas of Christian liberty – *Romans 14:1-4, 10-12.*

B. Each person must follow the dictates of his own conscience in areas not clearly spelled out in Scripture – *Romans 14:5.*

C. Don't exercise your liberty in a way that might harm someone else – *Romans 14:13-15.*

Often it is better to voluntarily enslave your liberty in order to maximize your ministry.

D. Don't exercise your liberty in a way that is divisive or destructive – *Romans 14:18-19.*

E. If it is doubtful, don't do it – *Romans 14:23.*

F. Exercise your freedom in a way that highly values outreach to those who do not know Christ
– *1 Corinthians 9:14-18, 22-23.*

G. Exercise your freedom in a way that is sensitive to the ministry context (audience)
– *1 Corinthians 9:20-21.*

H. Don't exercise your liberty in a way that might harm yourself – *1 Corinthians 9:24.*

I. Give careful attention to your heart, your motivation for exercising your freedoms the way you do
– *1 Corinthians 10:1-12.*

III. Evaluate and Perhaps Adjust Your Approach to Worship and Music.

- A. Honestly ask: what extreme do you lean toward when it comes to Christian liberty issues in general, and music and worship in particular?

- B. Determine now what steps need to be taken in this area to achieve a more biblical and balanced approach.