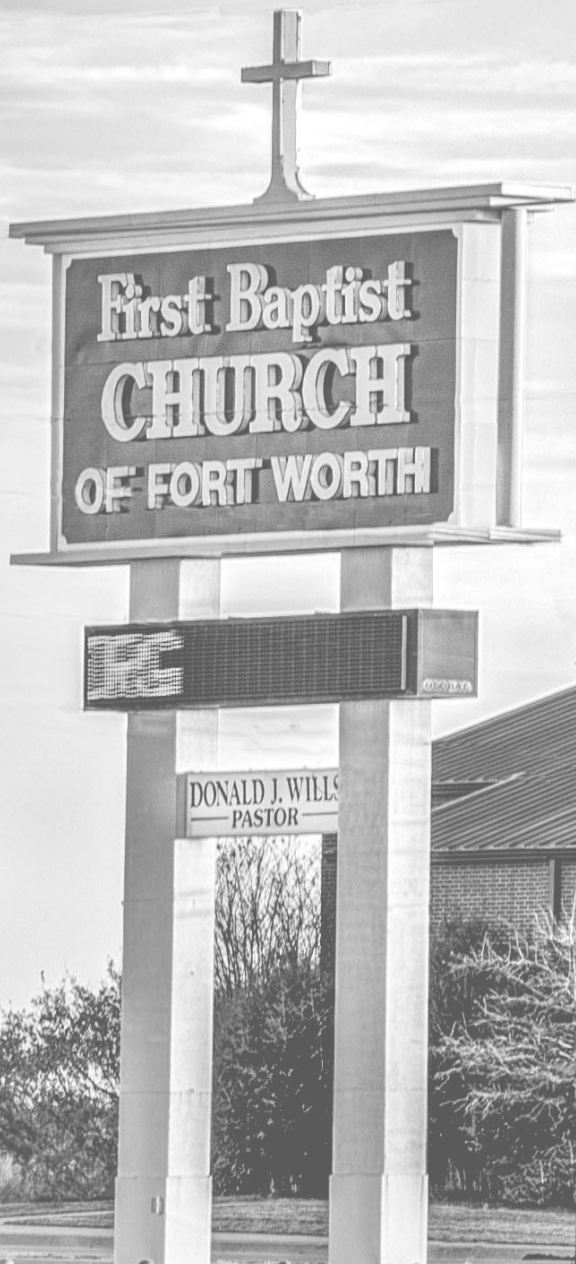
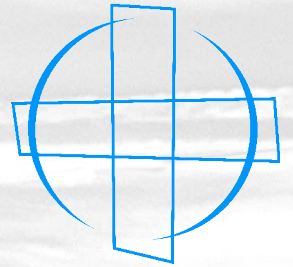


APRIL  
2025

Donald J. Wills  
*Senior Pastor*

# UNITED



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

# *A Note From Our Pastor*

Letter Coming Soon!



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned into your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30 am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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*April 6, 2025*



# *A New Perspective*

## *1 Corinthians 8:1-13*

Focal Verse:

“But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.”

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1 Corinthians 8:9

## Introduce

If I had the capital and physical resources to open a store called “No Laughing Matter” which sold only sugar-free and no-sugar-added desserts, I would in response to all the smiles, chuckles, and sometimes outbursts of laughter I have received in restaurants when asking about healthy options based on my diet. Because of chronically severe health problems, I have a very limited and highly restricted diet as many of you may know with whom I’ve had the opportunity to fellowship over a meal. In general, however, I am not a finicky eater, but typically try to eat healthily if I can. So, when I had to cease drinking sodas and stop consuming sugar along with controlling my intake of carbohydrates several years ago, I didn’t have a difficult time. As the expression goes, I quit cold turkey and never looked back. I exercised self-control and have never had the urge to gorge myself on sugary desserts or sodas even if people consumed them in front of me.

So, if I dine with someone, they can feel free to order a dessert. Or, if we are out, they can feel free to stop for ice cream and eat it in front of me. Usually, it seems to prick their conscience more than mine. Some will ask before ordering if I would mind them eating in front of me while others just order and then say, “I wish you could have some of this.”



Yet, I know what will happen should I choose to eat certain things, so I don’t partake. I resist. I don’t want to put myself in a place to jeopardize the remaining health I do have so that I can effectively minister as God has called me as long as He leaves me here on earth.

Yet, suppose for a moment, that I had a weak conscience and lacked self-control. If people ate dessert in front of me or stopped for ice cream, I would feel compelled to partake even though I knew the risk. In fact, I’ve actually eaten with people who have attempted to pressure me to eat something on my restricted list even though they were aware of my health problems. They would start the conversation innocently, “You should try just a little bit.” After I initially refuse, they ratchet up the pressure, “It won’t

## Introduce

hurt you to eat this every now and then." Still, I refuse and somehow it almost seems to offend them or hurt their feelings, but I know from experience what will happen so I persist in my refusal. Some people, however, would succumb to this pressure and many would simply partake without giving it a second thought because it's being served right in front of them. If I couldn't control myself, those dining with me should exercise restraint and not order these foods for my sake. Even more importantly, they should never taunt or tempt me to eat something that would harm my health out of respect and love for me.

You may be wondering what all this has to do with Scripture. Paul faced a similar issue in Corinth where some believers ate meat sacrificed to idols which caused other believers to stumble in sin and revert to their former pagan practices! The believers who ate the meat could do so because they knew the idols were powerless; they had the self-control not to resort to participating in the pagan rituals from which they had come. The other group, however, had no such self-control. They mixed their worship of the Lord with pagan ritual! Thus, Paul urged the self-controlled to be mindful or respectful of their brothers and sisters in the church. Rather than create an environment which could bring harm upon them by leading them into temptation and then sin, they should love them enough to refrain from eating the meat altogether. Paul wants us to adopt a new perspective in Christ. Instead of demanding our rights and freedoms, we must care for the spiritual development of fellow believers because we love them and want to see them mature in Christ and not fall away in sin.

Key  
Question

What are some areas in which we must exercise restraint so that we don't create an environment where other believers stumble in sin?



## 1 Corinthians 8:1-3

### **THE PITFALL OF KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT LOVE:**

After dealing with two questions about relationships in chapter 7, Paul now addresses a third question from the Corinthians about eating meat sacrificed to idols. Before we can analyze the passage, we must first understand the historical setting common in the first century, but almost completely foreign to us in the twenty-first century West. As part of pagan ritual, the ancients would offer sacrifices to appease their gods. They would burn or incinerate the inedible portions of the animal on the altar in a religious ceremony, but save the edible portions for consumption later. During an elaborate feast held right there in the temple complex, they would continue cooking some of the edible meat and consume it immediately. Then, they would sell the rest of the meat in the marketplace for people to eat privately in their homes. In cities with large Gentile populations and many temples dedicated to various deities, like Corinth, almost all the meat in the marketplace would have come from such a pagan sacrificial ritual.

For this reason, Christians whom Christ had saved from such a pagan background had a difficult decision to make about whether or not to eat this meat. Three basic questions thus emerge from their struggle with this issue. First, could Christians even purchase sacrificial meat from the marketplace to use privately in their



own homes? Second, could they share a meal at the home of an unbeliever where such meat was served? Third, could they participate in the feasts at the temple often seen as one's civic duty while at the same time "abstaining" from the overtly religious ceremonies honoring the deity? Over the course of the next three chapters, Paul will endeavor to discuss these questions in detail. But first, a modern example from the mission field will put this ancient problem into perspective.

While visiting friends serving as missionaries in a rural part of the Great Rift Valley near Butajira, Ethiopia, I experienced a phenomenon similar to this controversy in first-century Corinth. To help me appreciate the differences in culture, my friends took me

## Instruct

a supermarket in Adis Abba, the capital city, before making the two-hour journey to their home. In the meat section, I noticed that the various cuts had different stickers on the packaging. My friends explained that both Muslims and Christians employed imams and priests at the slaughterhouse to ensure the animals were dispatched in the appropriate way according to their religious rites. Subsequently, these individuals would also bless the meat with respect to their specific religious practices. Consequently, supermarkets labeled the meat so shoppers could know the difference and buy the “right” cut based on their religious tradition.

With a sharp divide not only between Muslims and Christians, but also with local traditional religions, it had the potential to create chaos in society—especially if one could not determine whether the meat had been properly “blessed” according to the person’s specific religious convictions! For example, the religious background of a restaurant owner would now matter greatly. Muslims could not eat at a Christian-owned restaurant, or at the very least not order meat, and vice versa. The same principle applied to local butcher shops and open-air markets as well. The people must hunt for approved products and know with certainty about the history of the things they sought to consume!

Above all, this posed a significant problem for missionaries. Although from our standpoint it technically didn’t matter what kind of meat they ate because such “blessings” have no bearing on us at all, missionaries would still want to have an open dialogue with everyone about Christ—including wayward Ethiopian Orthodox Christians

who believe that works lead to salvation. Therefore, to eat meat blessed by an imam would offend them and severely limit their potential to discuss the gospel. So, how could one overcome such an obstacle? Out of love and respect, the missionaries could have followed the practices of the particular people group whom they sought to reach so that it didn’t become a hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel. Even though not quite the same as the circumstances in Corinth, this modern practice in Ethiopia still gives us a good idea of what difficulty the church faced **concerning** this issue.

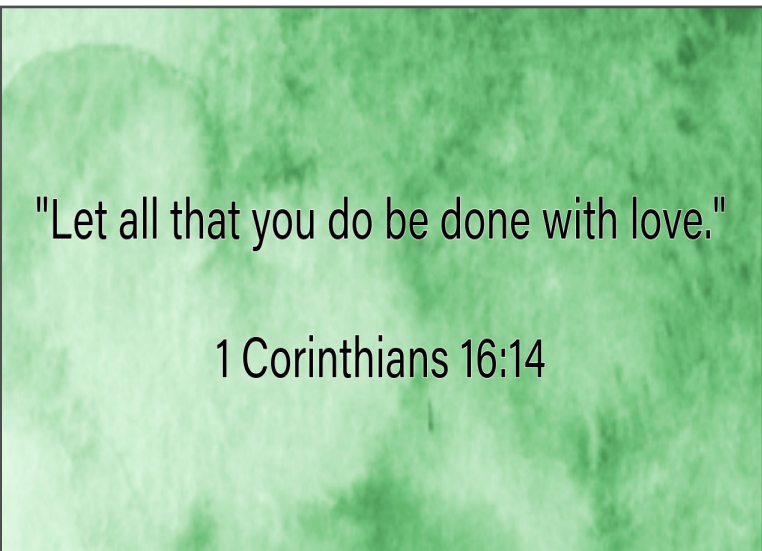


With this background in mind, we can now turn to an examination of Paul's response **concerning the things** [meat] **sacrificed to idols** (v. 1). As he has already done many times throughout this letter, he uses a slogan adopted by the Corinthians to show the error in their thinking. Proudly, the Corinthians proclaimed that they [i.e., **we**] **know that** they [**we**] **all have knowledge**. Yet, Paul corrects them. He points out that **knowledge** has the potential to **puff up** or make one arrogant whereas **love edifies** or builds up. He further criticizes their fraudulent **knowledge** by arguing, **"If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know."** Essentially, Paul derogatorily labels them know-it-alls and then quickly points out that they have deceived themselves. They really don't know as much as they think they do because they don't act in love! One day they will come to understand that true knowledge is predicated upon a love which seeks to build a person and help them mature in Christ rather than thrusting them into tempting situations which may lead to compromise.

At some point in life, most teenagers go through a stage where they believe they know everything. No one can tell them anything because they know best. This often leads them to question authority and challenge their parents. They have no consideration for the circumstances or how their actions may even affect others; they only seek to fulfill their personal desires regardless of the consequences. The Corinthians have this same teenage syndrome where they believe they know everything. In the same way, their **knowledge** has made them arrogant, imbuing them with a sense of superiority so they act without regard to how their actions may affect other believers.

As a result, the Corinthians contend that they have the right to eat the meat sacrificed to idols since it ultimately means nothing in the scope of salvation through Christ and a relationship with the one true God—for they rightly recognized that only one God exists. The pagan idols they once served were only chunks of carved stone

or hunks of precious metal fashioned after some physical image found in creation. They



"Let all that you do be done with love."

1 Corinthians 16:14

## Instruct

could not speak, see, or hear; they were utterly worthless and powerless. Although the Corinthians may have some of the facts correct in this instance, they don't exhibit the right motivation or use discretion when applying this knowledge. While we can confidently know something and stand firm on our convictions, the way we apply that knowledge matters just as much as the content of what we may know.

Hence, Paul reminds them that **if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him** (v. 3). We display our relationship with God through our **love** for one another. After all, Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples" ([John 13:35](#)). Moreover, we can **love** one another precisely because God first demonstrated His **love** for us ([1 John 4:19](#); [Rom 5:8](#)). Therefore, we should not use our **knowledge** to champion our personal freedom or demand our rights. On the contrary, we should use it to build the church which sometimes requires sacrifices and abdicating our personal freedom for the sake of others. However, this type of arrogant "**knowledge**" which the Corinthians displayed leads to the destruction or ruination of others ([8:11](#)). Instead of being characterized by this prideful, arrogant kind of **knowledge**, Christians must be motivated by **love** to do what builds others.

Question  
# 1

For the sake of love, when have you had to make sacrifices in order to build the church and help it to mature?

## 1 Corinthians 8:4-6

### **THE PREMINENCE(SUPERIORITY) OF GOD:**

Paul does agree with them to some extent that they have the right knowledge, but he disagrees with how they apply it because not everyone in the church has this same knowledge ([8:7](#)). When it comes to **eating** meat sacrificed **to idols**, in theory the Corinthians have the correct understanding! Paul even shares this same knowledge, for he interjects that *we know an idol is nothing* and **there is only one God** (v. 4). In the second part of this declaration, Paul appeals to Israel's statement of faith in Deuteronomy 6:4 known as The *Shema* (meaning "hear" in Hebrew): "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." In a polytheistic culture with many gods like Corinth, this alone would have set Christianity apart. Christians served **one God** who does not dwell in temples made with human hands ([Acts 17:24](#)). He has no carved image made after anything in creation as a representation of His likeness ([Rom 1:23](#)). But rather, God

fashioned man out the dust of the ground after His own image ([Gen 1:27](#)). When it came time to redeem a sinful mankind, God made Himself flesh and dwelt among us so that we might have eternal life ([John 1:14](#)). Even though the world rejected Him and He was sentenced to death in our place, He still offered us salvation as a gracious gift!

To stress how these **idols** don't really exist, Paul refers to them as "**so-called**" **gods** (v. 5). He explains, "For even if there are so-called gods, **whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords)**." This conditional sentence in Greek (i.e., "**even if**") expresses something contrary to fact or reality. However,



"Hear, O Israel: LORD our God, the LORD is one!"

Deuteronomy 6:4

Paul isn't expressing doubt or leaving open the possibility that some of these gods may exist as we would tend to understand the phrase **even if**. On the contrary, he denies this possibility altogether by demonstrating how they are merely figments of the imagination of those who worship them. Even though the pagans had numerous physical representations of their gods—to which Paul alludes through the aside **as there are many gods and many lords**—they still didn't exist physically. They only existed in the feeble minds of the worshipers who created them.

Consequently, Paul reiterates that **for us there is one God** (v. 6). We can know for a fact that this **one God** exists because we can see His handiwork through creation. Elsewhere Paul states, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" ([Rom 1:20](#)). Moreover, Paul describes God the Father as the creator or source of all things and Jesus Christ as the agent of creation through which everything came into existence (see [John 1:1-4](#); [Col 1:16](#); [Rom 11:36](#)). Thus, we owe both the physical life we can see and the spiritual life (i.e., salvation) we can have to Christ! Paul's point in illustrating this principle is to demonstrate God's effective power working in the world tangibly as proof for His existence. At this point, he is not attempting to defend the unity or oneness of the Godhead. Rather, he contrasts the power of God the Father and Jesus Christ together with the powerless of

## Instruct

the many gods and many lords the Gentiles worship to highlight their inexistence.

To further illustrate Paul's point about how God offers tangible evidence of His existence by interacting with His creation while the false gods created according to man's own preferences are powerless to respond, recall the challenge Elijah issued to the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel ([1 Kings 18:20-40](#)). Outnumbered 450 to one, Elijah challenged them to select a bull and prepare an altar with wood, but not light it on fire. They must call on their god, Baal, to send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. Ironically, Baal was supposedly the storm god in charge of the weather who should have no problem accomplishing such a feat! Yet, hours later Baal had not answered even though his prophets had begged and prayed profusely for him to act. In the meantime, Elijah had the altar for the Lord repaired and prepared in the same way with one exception. He had trenches dug around it. As an affront to show contempt toward the **so-called** storm god, Elijah commanded that the bull and wood on the altar be soaked three times with four waterpots so that even the trenches became full! In a grand display of His power, God answered Elijah and immediately sent fire from heaven consuming everything! What greater proof could God have offered for His existence than this?

Question  
# 2

To what elements of creation or things in life can you point to illustrate the existence of the one true God and our Savior Jesus Christ?

## 1 Corinthians 8:7-8

### **THE PREDICAMENT OF THE CONSCIENCE FOR SOME:**

Although many in the Corinthian church may have had this correct understanding about the one God who created the universe, Paul concedes that **not everyone has this knowledge** (v. 7). Yet, we must be clear that Paul is speaking to the believers in Corinth here and not the pagans who worship these false **idols**. So, what does Paul mean that **not** every believer possesses this **knowledge**? He explains that **some, with consciousness of the idol, eat it as a sacrifice to the idol** and because **their conscience is weak**, they are **defiled**. In simple terms, Paul argues that some people in the church are in danger of reverting to the pagan practices which they abandoned for Christ. They are returning to their old lifestyle and mixing it with their

worship of Christ in the present. However, our old life is incompatible with our new life in Christ. We cannot vacillate between the two! God won't tolerate it!

After their conversion, many Christians likely returned to participate in these sacrificial meals offered on behalf of these **idols** because they were so common and integral to social life in the first century. Despite knowing these gods did not exist in any form, many Christians who attended these feasts would revert to their

"But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua 24:15

old habits by participating in much of the excess and debauchery that occurred therein. When they return to the pattern of their old lives by visiting the public temples or attending cultic feasts in private homes, they still engaged in fellowship with the other worshipers and began worshiping the **idols** as though they actually existed. Because the worshipers perceived the god as being present at the meal, every attendee would actively participate in offering the sacrifice to the gods. Even though those Christians who had turned from idolatry may have believed that these **idols** were nothing, they still risked falling back into their old habits by attending these celebrations. For this reason, Paul explicitly forbids eating of idol meat in the temple publicly because it constituted a return to the idolatry which they left ([1 Cor 10:1-22](#)).

Question  
# 3

In what ways does placing ourselves in areas in which we may have once struggled put us at risk spiritually? What are some of those areas for you personally?

Paul describes these at-risk Christians in danger of reverting to their old habits as having a **weak conscience**. This isn't a slight on them nor is it an evaluation of their spiritual maturity, creating a dichotomy between the spiritually mature who can seemingly resist the temptation to return to their old lifestyle and the spiritually immature who can't. On the contrary, such a misguided interpretation comes from a misunderstanding of the term **conscience**. In our modern Western view, the

**conscience** functions as a little voice inside our minds where we debate between right and wrong. Cartoons will often illustrate this with a little “devil” and a little “angel” trying to convince the character to act a particular way. In the first century, however, the ancients didn’t view the **conscience** in this way. To them, the conscience was an awareness or “consciousness” of sin. Hence, they perceived the conscience as the ability to distinguish right from wrong—not the debate that occurs about doing one or the other.

In the context of 1 Corinthians, the Christians who attended these sacrificial feasts got so caught up in the moment that they lost awareness of their new identity in Christ. They didn’t even recognize that something was amiss or they were doing something wrong. They blindly went along with the crowd—never once stopping to ponder the danger they faced. However, we cannot use this as an excuse to justify our sin as if we didn’t know! As believers, we know better, but allow our circumstances to dictate our actions. Think about some of the times you have sinned in the past. In the back of your mind, you may have known that the action you undertook was sin, but in the heat of the moment you didn’t stop to contemplate it. Almost automatically and instinctively, you found yourself so engrossed in the circumstances that you didn’t even hesitate. You just did it. Instead of removing yourself from the environment, you allowed the environment to control you and lull you to sleep. You lost consciousness of the person who Christ had made you and you resorted to practicing your former habits.

For us, anger and wrath perhaps best exemplify this lack of spiritual awareness where we lose control and fly into a fit of rage. Let’s not fool ourselves into trying to justify our anger as somehow spiritual. Most examples of our anger are not the righteous wrath displayed by Jesus. Scripture clearly attests to the fact that “the

"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."

1 Timothy 4:1-2

wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God ”([Jas 1:20](#)). Certain environments trigger us. If possible, we need to remove ourselves from them. For instance, watching the idiocy of our world on the news can anger some. This then



puts them in a bad mood whereby they lash out at others for no real reason. In our minds, we may understand that God is in control and will one day establish justice, but we become angry over all the injustice we see right now. The news causes us to lose awareness of the self-control, patience, and love that we should exhibit as a believer and almost spontaneously enrages us.

For the most part, we never intentionally go into a particular setting or situation planning to sin, but in the midst of the circumstances we find ourselves caught up in sin even though we may truly know better. Like a dam which bursts, we get swept away by the resulting flood in the moment only to look back at all the carnage we caused after the wall of water settles down. We can't excuse this as if we couldn't help ourselves because we indeed had a choice. We could have decided beforehand not to put ourselves in that situation and risk the results. The Corinthians faced a similar problem. They theoretically "knew" that **there is only one God**, but their environment caused them to lose awareness and participate in things they now knew to be sinful when they got caught up in the pagan rituals. As a result, they were not actually conscious of all

Question  
# 4

In what environment(s) can you most easily lose awareness of your identity in Christ and revert to your former sinful habits?

Paul points out that **food** (i.e., meat offered to the idols) **does not commend us to God** (v. 8). **If we eat** it, he continues, **we are neither the better nor if we do not eat it are we worse. Food**, or any physical thing in our world for that matter, has no redeeming value. It is technically neutral. **Food**, particularly the meat sacrificed to idols, has nothing to do with our salvation and our relationship to the Lord. Whether **we eat** certain foods or we don't **neither** saves us **nor** prevents us from being saved. Hence, eating this meat does not give one an advantage nor does it put one at a disadvantage **if** they **do not eat it**. To be clear, Paul is not referring to inherently sinful



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actions—but what we would call the gray areas in life. These actions are not inherently sinful in themselves, but they can lead us to sin if we let our guard down.

For example, watching television or surfing the internet is not inherently wrong. In fact, we can watch some wholesome programs and even find some good biblical teaching which will help us mature in our faith. Although these mediums have no truly redeeming qualities, they do allow us to access information quickly. In a sense, however, they are still neutral. Whether we use them or we don't, they have no bearing on our salvation—only our response to the gospel and Christ do. Even though they may offer a service, they can also become distractions. These seemingly “neutral” objects can lead us astray depending on how we use them. If we become couch potatoes and spend hours aimlessly consumed with these devices, they can become a detriment and distraction to our spiritual development in Christ! If we watch unsavory programming, they can inspire lust or influence the way we talk or act. They can become instruments of sin if we let our guard down and don't take steps to safeguard our hearts and minds because they can cause us to lose awareness of our character in Christ.

Question  
# 5

In life, what “neutral” areas or objects can become the biggest source of distraction in your relationship with Christ?

## 1 Corinthians 8:9-13

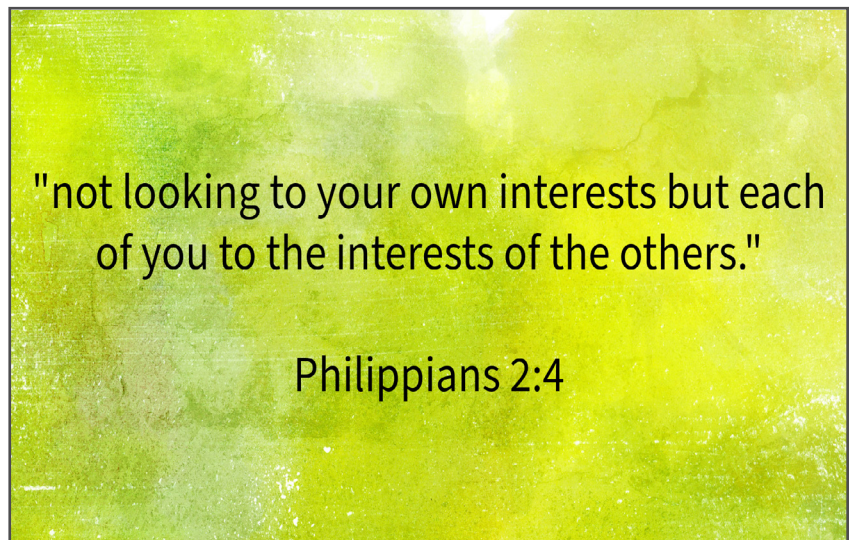
### THE NEW PERSPECTIVE WE OUGHT TO HAVE:

Finally, Paul warns them **not** to allow their freedom to **become a stumbling block to those who are weak** (v. 9). As believers, we should act out of love and not some type of “arrogant” knowledge (8:2-3). We must be careful that our actions don't lead others to relapse into the former life from which Christ has graciously saved them and lead them to sin. To stress this point, Paul asks a rhetorical question, “**For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the consciousness of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things also**” (v. 10)? To this, Paul adds a second question: “Should **the weak brother, for whom Christ died, be destroyed because of your knowledge**” (v. 11)? If an action causes a **brother** or sister in Christ to **sin**—leading them to ruination—we shouldn't do it even if it does not

constitute **sin** for us at the time. We must have a community mindset instead of demanding our personal rights and freedoms. Like Christ, we should always think about how our actions affect others ([Phil 2:1-4](#)).

Paul highlights the serious nature of this problem by revealing that **when you sin thus against** other believers **and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ** (v. 11). Paul is straightforward. To cause a brother or sister in Christ to relapse into their former lifestyle of **sin** is also a **sin** itself! Therefore, we ought to consider very carefully what Christ would have us do on matters of personal choice. Just because we can do something doesn't mean it is the best option and we should. If we cause someone else to sin, it becomes sin for us too! For this reason, Paul declares that he **will never again eat meat** sacrificed to idols **if it makes** fellow Christians **stumble** (v. 12). Instead, he will relinquish his own personal freedom and abstain for their sakes in order to help them mature in Christ.

This advice conflicts with our culture's view. Our culture would assert that we have the right to do whatever we want regardless of the effect it has on other people. They would further claim that we are not responsible for another's behavior, arguing that we did not "force" or coerce someone to make a personal choice. At the same time, many in



our culture refuse to take responsibility for their actions, so they excuse themselves by exclusively blaming others. In a sense, both viewpoints have *some* truth in them, but they fail to communicate the totality of God's truth found in Scripture. In reality, both parties share responsibility for their actions based upon Paul's remarks here. Although we are not solely responsible for the choices other people may make, God will hold us accountable if our actions cause others to **stumble** and **sin**. Likewise, God will also hold the person accountable for their own choices because it led them to choose **sin**.

Scripture, for example, advises us to dress modestly as befitting of our relationship with the Lord ([1 Tim 2:9-10](#)). For the sake of this illustration, let's expand this a bit. Certainly, this would include tight-fitting or revealing clothing, but also t-shirts with

## Instruct

risqué wording or vulgar slang that most may consider amusing, but not offensive. As an example, my parents wisely wouldn't let me wear a shirt that said "Practice Safe Sax" designed by members of the alto saxophone section of my high school band because of what it implied. Nevertheless, our society would balk at this. They would contend that we can wear whatever we want. If our outfit causes someone to lust even if we may not consider it "inappropriate," they would decry, "That's not on you. *They* shouldn't lust. You're not responsible for *their* choice." God, however, says, "Wait a minute. Think about the other person. Don't selfishly demand *your* rights." If we knowingly cause them to **sin** by our actions especially if we keep doing it after it comes to our attention, we are partially responsible. We have sinned by causing them to **stumble** and **sin**. Scripture declares this loudly and clearly!

Question  
# 6

What other activities, actions, or things can pose a risk of causing someone to stumble and revert to their former lifestyle of sin?

In addition, another area of contention which the principle in this chapter governs is the consumption of alcohol. Scripture strongly condemns drinking in excess and drunkenness ([Prov 23:20-21, 31-35](#); [Gal 5:21](#); [Rom 13:13](#); [Eph 5:18](#)). It clearly identifies it as a sin ([1 Cor 6:10](#)) because it leads to immorality and debauchery ([Gen 9:20-26](#); [19:30-38](#)). Moreover, it never satisfies so we crave more usually leading to excess ([Eccl 2:3](#))—only Christ can truly satisfy our deepest needs by filling us with His presence ([Eph 5:18](#))! At the same time, Scripture does record people drinking wine and using it for medicinal purposes ([1 Tim 5:23](#)). In this lesson, we won't be able to cover this issue sufficiently from every angle in one week. So, I will introduce the topic and re-visit it where appropriate as we discuss chapters 9 and 10. For now, we will summarize the topic and the position we hold as a church based upon the application of this passage.

When it comes to alcohol, most people cannot exercise self-control and stop before becoming

"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,"

Ephesians 5:18

drunk. Most cannot drink one or two glasses and call it quits; they drink to excess. Even then, the effect of the alcohol depends upon a number of other factors, including the proof or percentage of alcoholic content in the beverage as well as the body type of the person consuming it. Moreover, many people are also predisposed to alcoholism genetically. According to secular research published by the National Library of Medicine on the propensity for alcoholism, "Twin studies in the US and Europe suggest that approximately 45-65% of the liability is due to genetic factors."\* Most people don't set out to become alcoholics, but even one drink for a person with a hereditary disposition puts them at grave risk! To consume even one drink for more than half the population would greatly increase the likelihood of alcoholism.

### *In Reference*



*Howard J. Edenberg and Tatiana Foroud, "Genetics and Alcoholism," in the National Review Gastroenterol Hepatol (Aug 1, 2014), available from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>.*

In itself, alcohol has no redeeming qualities. In the same study mentioned above, the researchers found that "alcohol is widely consumed, but excessive use creates serious physical, psychological, and social problems and contributes to many diseases."\* Alcohol destroys relationships, harms, productivity, and even kills. But one may argue, that it only does this when used excessively leading to drunkenness. To which I would reply, "How do you know you're not one of the 45-65% of people with the gene for alcoholism?" One drink may lead to a lifetime of regret and dysfunction. The only way not to find out is abstinence! Moreover, I also bid you to think about your fellow believers. What about those who have had a problem with alcoholism, but God has saved them from it? By drinking, our consumption of alcohol may create a bad example and a poor environment, causing them to revert to their former lifestyle. It can only take one bad decision and one drink to **stumble**.

When we drink just like anything else we put ahead of Christ, we push Him out of our lives by allowing another substance to control us. Furthermore, we lose control of our faculties and minds—and no longer can we glorify the Lord in such a condition. Whether little or much, alcohol never truly satisfies. For this reason, Paul urges us not to be drunk with wine which leads to immorality, but filled with the Holy Spirit

(Eph 5:18). Based on this overview, out of love and respect for those in the church, we should refrain from drinking any alcohol. We should drink no alcohol at all because it could cause someone else to **stumble** and succumb to a lifestyle of drunkenness and debauchery. By setting an example that causes someone else to **sin**, we have now sinned **against Christ** ourselves! Therefore, let us share Paul's perspective in verse 12 adapted to this example: **If drinking alcohol makes my brother or sister stumble, I will never again drink lest it cause them to sin.** Our church's position, therefore, is this position clearly stated in Scripture!

If any of these illustrations or topics offended you this week, whether about modest clothing, alcohol, or anything else, you must ask yourself, "Why?" Even though we may have the freedom to do something, it doesn't always benefit us or serve the purpose of the Lord to do so. What's more important

"When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ."

1 Corinthians 8:12

to you: to get your way and have your freedom or to make a sacrifice that glorifies the Lord for the good of others in the church? If we insist on demanding our rights and exercising our freedom at the expense of others in the kingdom, we don't exhibit the love and selflessness to which Christ has called us. And this is the very same problem with which Paul dealt in the Corinthian church some 1,975 years ago! God has called us to have a new perspective in Christ. He wants us to care for one another and grow together so we can advance the gospel into a lost culture. Rather than giving our preferences and opinions on a specific issue, let us ask, "Does what I am doing glorify the Lord and build up the people in his church?"

Question  
# 7

How do you demonstrate this new perspective to which God has called us in your daily life and service of Christ?

How many of us would be able to resist eating sugar-loaded desserts if everyone at the table, except us, ordered one? How many would be able to continue abstaining if the people with whom we ate pressured us to take a little bit or get a dessert for ourselves? Probably, not many of us could answer with an affirmative, “I can.” For health reasons, however, many people need to have strict diets and eat more healthily to control chronic problems like diabetes and high blood pressure. Most likely, if someone we loved had such a problem, we would put forth an effort to help them achieve success. We would sacrifice our own freedoms and abstain from desserts altogether. Or we would make something sugar-free or with no sugar added to share with them. We certainly wouldn’t callously eat in front of them or heinously pressure them to eat a dessert. If we did, we would knowingly compromise their long-term health. If we do these things, on the other hand, we must re-evaluate why we do them and what purpose it serves.

When it comes to personal matters of preference and freedom in the church, we must have the same perspective. We must abstain from those things which may cause people to stumble and sin. Moreover, we should never create an environment in which fellow believers feel tempted or even pressured to join in something that may cause them to revert to their former life apart from Christ. Yet, often in the church, we see individuals demanding their rights and flaunting their freedoms to the detriment of others. This should never be! This isn’t something unique to our modern Western culture of individualism, but rather it exemplifies sinful human nature. In Christ, God has called us to a new perspective—one where we strive to glorify Him while demonstrating care for other people instead of selfishly seeking what benefits us. Have you adopted this new perspective?

## *Incorporate*

When you realize something in which you have participated has caused another believer to stumble and sin, what is your first reaction or response? What should it be based on this passage?

Ask yourself honestly, is there anything at all in my life that I would continue doing or refuse to give up for the sake of another believer? Why or why not? What does such a refusal say about one's relationship with Christ?

Why must we be careful not to confuse sin and the so-called gray areas of life? How do you distinguish between the two? According to this passage, when do those gray or neutral areas become sin for us?



## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*April 13, 2025*



# *A New Sacrifice From An Old-Age Promise*

*1 Corinthians 15:1-11*

Focal Verse:

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

1 Corinthians 15:3

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*April 20, 2025*



# *A New Life*

## *1 Corinthians 15:12-28*

Focal Verse:

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

1 Corinthians 15:20

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**THE CRUCIFIXION WHICH TRANSFORMS:**











*April 27, 2025*



# *A New Body*

## *1 Corinthians 15:29-58*

Focal Verse:

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

1 Corinthians 15:52

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Question

# 6

Who are the deacons # 6 serve in our congregation? Who could you prayerfully nominate as a deacon that fits these qualifications?















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