

1 Corinthians 8:1-13: Make Decisions with Others in Mind

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1 Corinthians / 1 Corinthians 8

Introduction

- Chaos at Georgia/Texas game - Refs made a bad call, hundreds of water bottles pollute the field, refs overturn call - Kirby Smart: “I will say that now we’ve set a precedent that if you throw a bunch of stuff on the field and endanger athletes, that you’ve got a chance to get your call reversed,” Smart said. “And that’s unfortunate, because to me, that’s dangerous. That’s not what we want. That’s not criticizing officials. That’s what happened.”
- Decisions have consequences, and decisions don’t affect only you. The decisions you make have an impact on others.
- You’ve made millions of decisions over the course of your life. Some of those decisions have been significant. Some of those decisions not so significant.
- You want to make wise decisions, and you typically want to make decisions that you feel like will make your life better. “What choice can I make that will give me the greatest satisfaction and joy in life?” Your decisions are usually made with you in mind. Attitude is: “It’s my decision. If you don’t like it, deal with it.”
- That’s NOT the attitude Christ calls us to. In this passage, Paul calls us to make decisions with others in mind. I want to show you three questions to ask yourself when you make decisions that will help you make decisions with others in mind.

How does my decision reflect what I know to be true?

- Temple worship a huge part of life in ancient Corinth. Temples not just a place of worship but also a place of social gathering. Because of sacrifices at the temple, it was a place to get meat. Question arises: Is it ok to eat meat sacrificed to idols? Paul's answer: It depends. It was certainly not ok to participate in pagan worship ([1 Corinthians 10](#)). But what about buying meat at a marketplace that had been offered as a sacrifice at the temple? Or, what about eating a meal at a social gathering at the temple that was just a meal and not part of pagan worship? Going to an Asian restaurant and seeing a statue of Buddha. Should you eat a meal there?
- Should they attend banquets at pagan temples? The Corinthians response: "We have knowledge..." Their attitude: "We know better. Idols aren't gods at all." If that's the case, what's the big deal?
- Paul doesn't disagree, but Paul pushes back. Knowledge can lead to arrogance, an attitude that says, "I know what's best. It's my decision. Deal with it."
- You know people who are "know it alls" who look down on others who do not know as much as they do. Two reminders from Paul: 1. Knowledge is great, but so what if your knowledge only puffs you up. (Paul already called them arrogant (5:2). What God desires is for you to love because love builds people up while arrogant knowledge tears down. 2. What matters isn't your knowledge as much as God's knowledge of you. God knows those who love Him, not those who just have a knowledge of Him. (This is a gentle rebuke.)
- What we actually know: (Corinthians knowledge was more limited than they thought.)

- **God is one (vs. 4-6)** - The Corinthians are right. We have one God who exists in three persons. Paul makes reference to the Father and Son. Earlier ([1 Cor. 2](#)), Paul wrote about the Holy Spirit. The true God has made everything.
- **We exist for Him (vs. 6)** - If one God, we can eat the meat because it doesn't matter. Those idols have no real power. BUT... We exist for Him. He created us, and He redeemed us. We owe Him our lives. While not technically wrong to eat the meat, you exist for God. What would He have you to do?
- **God want us to build others up (vs. 1)** - It may not be wrong to eat the meat, but would eating the meat build others up? Or, would it hinder them in their walk with the Lord? The believers did not agree. Some thought it was sinful to eat the meat.
- You'll be confronted with many decisions. Do the decisions you make actually reflect what you know about God: that He is One, that you exist for Him, and that He wants you to build others up?

How does my decision help others to know the truth?

- Some believers in Corinth claim to have knowledge - they know the idols aren't real gods. Some were arrogant in their knowledge. They looked down on other Christians that didn't share their views or didn't like that they ate meat sacrificed to idols.
- Vs. 7 - Paul's response: "Not everyone has this knowledge." Some in Corinthian church new to the faith and just coming out of a lifestyle of pagan worship. Their lives had been so immersed in and traumatized by pagan worship that they couldn't imagine going back to one of those temples.

- Paul says some believers have weak consciences. These believers simply aren't ready to go back to the temple. They haven't grown into the knowledge that others within the church have. If they go back, even for a banquet, they might be highly tempted to go back to their idolatrous ways. The sites and smells of the temple might be too much for them.
- If these more mature believers went to the temple for banquets, what message would it send to the more immature believers? That their concerns weren't valid? Would going to the temple actually help these younger believers grow in their knowledge of God? What message would it send them? Would it hinder their growth?
- If we know that God has called us to build others up, then we can't make decisions with an attitude of: "It's my decision: deal with it." We must consider how are decisions either help someone know the truth or hinder someone knowing the truth.
- **Arrogance can lead to ignorance.** You can be arrogant in your knowledge to the degree that you actually ignore the people around you. To you, you know better, so it doesn't matter what others think or how your decision might affect them. (Thoughts that cross your mind: "What's wrong with you?" "Why are you so immature?")
- **Your decisions never just affect you.** Your family sees your decision. Your friends see. Your church sees. Your decisions say something about your faith, and your decisions give you an opportunity to help others understand the work of God in your life. (E.g., here's why I made this decision. Here's how I prayed about this decision. Here's what passages of Scripture helped to make this decision, etc.)
- Your decisions may not be sinful, but they not be helpful if you are not considering the affect your decisions have on others and how your decisions either help someone or hinder someone in their walk with the Lord.

How does my decision demonstrate selflessness?

- vs. 8-9 - The food is just food. If the more knowledgeable Corinthians eat the food, it doesn't have any bearing on their relationship with God. But, eating the food could cause them to be a stumbling block to their weaker brothers and sisters. Just because the more knowledgeable Corinthians had the right to eat the meat didn't mean that they should.
- vs. 10 - If a weaker brother or sister sees one of their more knowledgeable brothers or sisters go to the temple to eat food offered to idols, wouldn't they be encouraged to participate in something that they are convinced is wrong? Might it actually encourage them to turn back to idolatry? To participate NOT just in social meals at the temple but also in the ritual worship of the temple?
- vs. 11 - The weak person, whom Christ died, may be tempted to go back to idolatry. The knowledgeable Christian who exercised his right might cause the weaker believer to stumble back into paganism. The warning: be careful about your decision - it may lead someone away from Christ rather than to Christ.
- vs. 12-13 To insist on your personal rights that could potentially cause someone to stumble is sinful. So, for Paul, while he had the right to eat any meat he wanted, he would resist for the sake of his weaker brothers and sisters. An act of selfless love for others.
- As a follower of Jesus, you have Christian rights, but it may not always be wise to exercise those rights. E.g., the right to drink in moderation - but what about that friend who came out of a life of alcohol abuse? How would your couple of beers a week affect him? Or, the right to consume R rated movies - but for someone who came out of an R rated life - and you invite them over to watch that content with you - how might that discourage them if they are trying to leave a lifestyle that particular

movie celebrates? What about how you use your money? You are free to spend your money on luxury items, expensive vacations, etc., but how might that cause a brother or sister who has struggled with materialism to stumble? You have the right to spook out your house for halloween, but how might that cause someone to feel pressured to celebrate something they associate with evil?

- **Just because you can doesn't mean you should.** You can make all kinds of decisions that aren't sinful decisions, but may not be wise or loving decisions. Some of the things you may want do, you maybe shouldn't just out of a heart of selflessness and love for someone else.
- **Don't make decisions based on what others will think of you but on how you can serve others.** Paul is not encouraging us to live to be people pleasers or to cater to the preferences of others. Paul is calling us to live with understanding toward others and make sacrifices to help others grow in their own walk with the Lord.
- This morning, you have some decisions to make. Are you making those decisions informed by truth, and are you making those decisions considering how your decisions will affect those God has called you to serve?
- **Jesus made His decisions with us in mind.** He wasn't concerned with people's criticisms of Him (e.g., Pharisees), but He was concerned with giving up His life so that we could find life. He was concerned with meeting us where we are, not scolding us for our lack of immaturity, but instead showing us that He is the way. Jesus was selfless for us. He sacrificed for us. He gave up His life for you. He died and rose again for you so you might have life abundant and eternal. Today, repent of your sins and place your faith in Him.