

Introduction

I want to start this morning by asking a few questions. How many of you went to a local pagan temple to buy meat this week? I would venture to say that none of you went to Aphrodite's temple to pick up some ground chuck or a steak.

How many of you have ever wondered if it is okay to drink wine or beer with your meal or after at a friend's barbecue? Some Christians don't think twice about social drinking, while others believe it is a sign of carnality and immaturity. How many of you think that certain styles of music are evil and should never be used? How about dancing? Is it okay for people to dance, or is that a worldly practice that leads to sensual behavior? How many of you think that it is sinful for a man to have hair down to his shoulder, or for a woman to have short hair? How many believe it is sinful for a woman not to wear a hat at a church service? How many believe that it is sinful for a woman to wear pants to church?

How many of you have heard that our freedom of speech is being threatened? How many of you have heard that the right to bear arms is being threatened? On December 15, 1791, the U.S. adopted and ratified ten amendments to the constitution, which are known as the Bill of Rights. Much is being done to take away some of those rights. Not much is said about how to properly use our rights.

Our passage today is not about drinking wine or beer. It is not about the style of music, or dancing. Our passage is not about hair or clothing styles. Our passage today is Paul's response to a question asked by the Corinthians about whether it was okay to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. For most of us, we do not give too much thought to eating meat that was sacrificed to idols. We are not aware of that practice in America, and it is not an issue on the forefront of our minds. We do have questions about drinking, dancing, smoking, music, dress and many other things. How do we answer these questions when the Scripture is not crystal clear, or there is disagreement among Christians about the liberties and rights that we have as Christians. What are the guiding principles to help us decide what we should or should not do? The example in our passage today is not a common one today, but the principle that Paul shares is extremely relevant to all of us. Even though we may have a right, we need to use our rights responsibly. Our rights are not given to us to harm others. In our passage, Paul gives four reasons why knowledge alone cannot be used to determine our liberties. The conclusion is that we must let the love of Christ guide us in these decisions.

Before we get into the text today, it would be helpful to give you some background information. Then, we will be able to understand why the Corinthians were asking their question about whether it was okay to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

Corinth was a city full of idols, and had numerous temples dedicated to their idols. Aphrodite was the biggest idol, and Corinth was known as Aphrodite's city. She was regarded the guardian of the city. Aphrodite was the goddess of sexual love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation. Her temple was at Acrocorinth, which was above the city. But the temple of Aphrodite was only one of many. Apollo (male deity), Hermes (male deity), Asklepios (male deity), Demeter and Kore (female deities), Isis, Sarapis, Poseidon (male deity, ruler of the sea), Hera, Juno, Athena, Artemis, Nike, Tych, Zeus (male deity), Helios (the Sun) (male deity), Pan (male deity), Dionysos (male deity), Hygeia and Panacea (female deities, representing physical and spiritual healing) (Hygeia was supposedly the daughter of Asklepios), and Venus (female deity) (goddess of love) were all idols that were worshipped, and had temples and/or shrines in Corinth.

These temples had meeting places and dining halls. Historians say that in the 5th century BC, there were twenty-five buildings with thirty dining rooms. The dining rooms were small and would seat five to ten people at a time. The meeting places were fairly large and could accommodate large gatherings. These meeting places were used for weddings and other gatherings. If you were invited to a wedding, it was most likely going to be held in one of these temples, and any food that was served at that wedding or gathering, had probably been sacrificed to that idol. In verse ten, Paul mentions dining in an idol's temple. The Corinthian Christians were not going to these temples to worship that idol; they were most likely going to a wedding or other event, and the meat served had been sacrificed to idols.

(1 Cor 8:10) "For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?"

Eating meat sacrificed to an idol did not just happen at the temple. There was no refrigeration, so meat would spoil quickly. When people brought their animal sacrifices to the temple, it was divided up in three portions. The fat portion was offered as a sacrifice to the deity. The fat was regarded as the best portion, and it also produced a lot of smoke, which was regarded as something pleasant for the deity. The second portion went to the priest that was officiating. The priests received far more than they could consume right away. A 1000-lb steer nets about 430 pounds of meat. There are thirty-eight pounds of ribs, twenty-five pounds of brisket, and two hundred and ten pounds of ground round and ground chuck. The priest's portion would be over a hundred and forty pounds of meat. He could generate some nice income from these sacrifices. The priests had arrangements with the butchers and meat markets, and the meat would be sold to them. Sometimes, the butcher shop was at the back of temple premises.

The third portion of the sacrifice went to the person who brought the sacrifice. He would take it home, and his family and relatives would eat it. When unbelieving friends and relatives invited you over for a meal, it was highly likely that the meat had been sacrificed to an idol.

There were a few ways that you could get served meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. The first is meat served in one of the temples, and was most likely in wedding or other event. The second way is at the home of the person that had given the animal to be sacrificed. The third way would be meat obtained from the local meat market. If you went to buy meat at the meat market, it was most likely to be meat that had sacrificed to idols. If you went over to a friend's house, it is likely that the meat served came from the meat market, and had originated in one of the temples as a sacrifice to an idol. So, any meat that was bought and served in your own home, or anyone else's home was probably sacrificed to an idol. In 1 Corinthians 10:25-27, Paul said to eat anything that is sold in the meat market, or served to you by an unbeliever without asking questions. Paul knew the source of the meat was the priests in these idolatrous temples, and he did not want people defiling their own conscience, or the conscience of others who saw them eating meat that they knew was sacrificed to an idol. In our text today, Paul is primarily dealing with meat that was being eaten in one of these temples. In chapters 8-10, Paul is dealing with meat eaten that has been sacrificed to idols, and he wanted the Corinthians to understand the guiding principles for their question.

(1 Cor 10:25–27) "Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; {26} FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS. {27} If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake."

When we go to the butcher or grocery store, the meat has been slaughtered, but it was not sacrificed to idols. There is a halal meat, which has been prepared for Muslims, and it can be found in many meat markets and in some grocery stores. Halal means permissible in Arabic, and halal meat is that which has been slaughtered according to Islamic law. “Animals must be healthy and alive at the time of the slaughter, and all blood is drained from the carcass. During the process, a Muslim will recite a dedication, known as tasmiya or shahada.”¹ Unless you are buying halal meat, you will most likely not deal with this. However, there are 175 chain restaurants in America that serve halal meat. Fast food restaurants that are on this list include: McDonald’s, Burger King, Wendy’s, KFC, Subway, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, Sonic Drive-In, and Arby’s. “The halal meat served at these restaurants is hand slaughtered and blessed by Muslim clerics.”² So, it is possible that you have eaten meat at one of these fast-food restaurants that has been dedicated to an idol, and did not even realize it.

So, most of the meat in Corinth had been sacrificed to idols. The Corinthians wanted to know if it was okay to eat the meat. In their letter, they said that they knew that there was only one God, and that things sacrificed to idols was nothing. They had knowledge, but Paul wanted them to know that knowledge was not sufficient in determining what is possible. He gave four reasons why knowledge was insufficient. His conclusion is that love is the best guide, and he gives four reasons why love should be used in determining whether something is permissible.

Determining Our Liberties

1. Knowledge is insufficient
 - a. Knowledge makes arrogant
 - b. Our knowledge is incomplete
 - c. Not everyone has the same knowledge
 - d. Our knowledge can ruin a weaker brother
2. Love is the best guide
 - a. Love edifies
 - b. Love deepens our relationship with God
 - c. Love considers what is best for others
 - d. Love does not cause others to stumble

(1 Cor 8:1–13) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. {2} If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; {3} but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. {4} Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. {5} For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, {6} yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. {7} However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. {8} But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. {9} But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. {10} For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? {11} For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-27324224>

² <https://foodsvision.com/what-fast-food-restaurants-serve-halal-meat/>

for whose sake Christ died. {12} And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. {13} Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

1. **Knowledge is insufficient** (1 Cor 8:1-4)

It is apparent that in the letter that the Corinthians wrote to Paul, asking if it was lawful to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols, that they also said that they knew that all things were lawful, and that they knew that idols were not God, and that there is only one God. So, Paul answers their question, and deals with knowledge. He makes it very clear that knowledge by itself cannot be used to determine whether we should do something or not.

(1 Cor 8:1–4) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. {2} If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; {3} but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. {4} Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.”

a. **Knowledge makes arrogant** (1 Cor 8:1)

The first reason that knowledge is not sufficient in making these determinations is that knowledge makes arrogant. The KJV says, “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” That is a very literal and accurate translation. The Greek word is physio (Strong’s G5448), and it means to inflate, blow up, or puff up. Figuratively, it is used to make proud or arrogant. When people feel that they know something, the tendency is to get puffed up and proud, especially around those who do not have the same knowledge as you. 1 Corinthians 13 is known as the love chapter. However, Paul does not speak of love just in that chapter. Here, he tells the Corinthians that knowledge puffs up. In 1 Corinthians 13:4, he wrote that “love is not arrogant (puffed up). Paul contrasts knowledge, which puffs up, with love that edifies.

(1 Cor 8:1) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies..”

(1 Cor 13:4) “Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,”

b. **Our knowledge is incomplete** (1 Cor 8:2)

The second reason that knowledge is not sufficient is that even when someone feels that they know something, they really do not know as they ought to know. In 1 Corinthians 13:12, Paul wrote that we now see in a mirror dimly. That verse made a strong impression on me, and I have tried to keep that before me. There are some things that I have not been overly interested in, like end-time theology. It is easy to say that I see dimly, very dimly. However, there are things that I have read, meditated, and studied, and feel that I have some knowledge about it. In the area of church government and leadership, I feel that God has given me a lot of knowledge and understanding. Because of that knowledge, I can be firm at times when defending what I believe scripture teaches us about these things. This verse helps keep me in check. In reality, I do not yet know as I ought to know. God has given me some revelation, and I am grateful for that revelation, but there is so much more to learn about church government. I have said many times that I have a thimble full of knowledge, and there is an ocean of knowledge to learn. Knowledge

puffs up, and even when we think we know something, we do not yet know as we ought to know. That should create a humility in each of us.

(1 Cor 8:2) “If anyone supposes that he **knows** anything, he has not yet **known** as he ought to **know**;”

(1 Cor 13:12) “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

c. Not everyone has the same knowledge (1 Cor 8:7)

In the grey areas, where we are trying to discern whether we should or should not do something, knowledge is not enough. Knowledge puffs up and can lead to arrogance. Our knowledge is incomplete. Third, not everyone has the same knowledge that we have. In verse seven Paul said, “However not all men have this knowledge.” Paul switches from what we know or don’t know to what others know or don’t know. Our decisions are not just about us. Our decisions affect other people, and we must take other people into consideration.

(1 Cor 8:7) “However not all men have this **knowledge**; but some, being accustomed to the **idol** until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their **conscience being weak is defiled**.”

What was it that others might not know? Some of the Corinthians knew that there is only one God, and that there is no such thing as an idol in the world. Other believers, particularly new believers that had not had much teaching, may not have that knowledge. While someone who knew that all foods had been declared clean, and they were now free to eat all food, and that idols are not anything at all, not everyone knew that. There were people in their culture who felt that by partaking of food that had been sacrificed to idols was sinful and could bring evil spirits into their lives. Therefore, in their conscience, it would be wrong to eat meat that was sacrificed to idols. Because their conscience told them it was wrong, they defiled their conscience when they ate this meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

(1 Cor 8:4–13) “Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to **idols**, we **know** that there is no such thing as an **idol** in the world, and that there is no God but one. {5} For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, {6} yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”

Our conscience is like an instrument that is programmed to tell us when we are about to do something that goes against the moral plumbline. Our conscience insists that we do what we think is right and avoid what we think is wrong. If our conscience was programmed with a perfect understanding of God’s word and ways, then our conscience would be a true gauge of sin and righteousness. However, if we have a lack of understanding or our consciences have been programmed with values not supported by scripture, we can get a faulty reading. Our consciences can be mistaken.

Ray Stedman, who was a great Biblical scholar and preacher said, “*There is a very common myth abroad that says conscience is the means by which we tell what is right and what is wrong. But conscience is never that. It is training that tells us what is right and wrong.*” Some of the

Corinthians did not have this knowledge about food and idols. The Corinthians should take into consideration the level of knowledge and maturity of those around them, and not just base it on their own knowledge.

d. Our knowledge can ruin a weaker brother (1 Cor 8:9-11)

The fourth reason that we should not base these decisions on what we know is that our knowledge can ruin a weaker brother. When a weaker brother sees us eating food sacrificed to the idol, and this violates his conscience, he defiles his conscience. In verse ten, he said, “For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.” In our minds and conscience, it may not be a sin, but in someone else’s conscience, it is wrong, and can ruin them. Therefore, Paul exhorted them, “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.”

(1 Cor 8:9-11) “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. {10} For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? {11} For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.”

In past messages I have spoken about two airline crashes in 2009 that happened because of faulty readings in their gauges. A Turkish Air was coming in for a landing at Schipol Airport in Amsterdam, and the altimeter gave a false reading. At 1,950 feet, it registered as ground level, and the autopilot reduced the engine speed for the landing. Unfortunately, they were not at ground level and the plane crashed. This was because their instrument was not calibrated correctly. Our consciences are like that altimeter, and if they are not calibrated with the word of God, we can have problems.

The second crash that year was an Air France flying from Brazil to France. While they were over the Atlantic Ocean the air speed gauge showed that they were flying too fast, and the autopilot slowed the engines. The gauge still showed they were flying too fast and the autopilot slowed it down even more. It continued to slow down the plane until eventually the engines stalled, and the plane crashed. All 228 people aboard the plane were killed.

Paul was telling the Corinthians that not everyone had this knowledge about idols and food sacrificed to idols. In their minds and conscience, it was wrong to do this. So, when they ate or saw other believers eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols, it was a violation of their conscience. To them, it was sin. Paul said to take care that this liberty of theirs did not become a stumbling block to the weak, those with a weak conscience. By their knowledge, those who were weak were encouraged to eat meat, violate their conscience, and were ruined.

In 1 Timothy 1:18-19, Paul encouraged Timothy to fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience. He went on to say that those who rejected this have suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. We need to be careful that we do not cause others to ruin their conscience, and then suffer shipwreck in regard to their faith. We need to be careful that this liberty of ours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak, who may not have the same knowledge as us.

(1 Tim 1:18–19) “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, {19} keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.”

We are not to do anything that ruins the faith of our brothers, for whose sake Christ died. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are important enough for to lay His life down for. I will never forget what the Lord said to me one day about my wife. He told me that I had better take good care of her because she is special to Him. The truth is that we are all special to Him. He loved us so much that He was willing to lay His life down for us. We are not to destroy or ruin the very ones that He gave His life to save.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded the words of Jesus about causing a little one to stumble. He said, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.” These weak brothers that may not have the same knowledge as us, can be ruined by the liberties we take. Therefore, we need to take care that this liberty of ours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

(Mark 9:42) “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.”

2. Love is the best guide

Paul contrasts knowledge with love. He gives several reasons why we need to consider love when making a decision about what is permissible.

a. Love edifies (1 Cor 8:1)

The first reason that love needs to be used in determining whether we should do something is that love edifies and builds up other people. While knowledge can puff up or make us arrogant, love strengthens other people. While we might destroy someone by not considering the impact of our decision on a weaker brother, when we make love a priority, we will do things that build up and encourage others.

(1 Cor 8:1) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.”

After I had been a Christian for a few years, I knew that I had been called to leadership in the church. I thought through some of the issues like alcohol. I knew that I was free to drink alcohol. I knew that they drank wine at the wedding in Cana, and Jesus made that wine. I knew that the cup that they drank with the Lord’s Supper was not grape juice, but wine. I also knew of the warnings against being drunk with wine in both the Old and New Testament. I knew that I had freedom to drink wine in a responsible way. I made a decision not to drink wine, but it was not based strictly on knowledge. As a pastor, I am setting an example for others, and I am in the public eye. There are many that struggle with alcohol, and my drinking of alcoholic beverages could be the cause of one of them relapsing into their addiction.

In 1994 I was in Sioux City, South Dakota playing a golf tournament and I got into a conversation with one of the Sheriff deputies that was standing outside the Dakota Dunes

clubhouse. He told me that 95% of the people incarcerated in that state were there because of alcohol related charges. Later on, after I had retired from professional golf and had become a chaplain at the Cobb County Adult Detention Center in Marietta, Georgia, I found out that 95% of those incarcerated were there for drug or alcohol related charges. This confirmed to me that I did not ever want to drink in front of others that could cause them to stumble. Paul deals primarily with the conscience of the weaker brother, but there are many other problems besides the conscience. So, one of the weightiest factors was the consideration of others.

When the COVID outbreak began, our church was considering our options. Most of our small congregation at that time were older people, who had been identified as one of the most vulnerable groups. I called another pastor, and was asking him what their church was going to do. His answer must have come out of 1 Corinthians because he said they were trying to do the most loving thing for their people. As a pastor, they were looking for ways to protect their congregation, not put them at risk. We took the same approach and began to meet on zoom. We wanted to provide fellowship, teaching, and encouragement, but without the risk. Much more is known about COVID and how to treat it, so it is not as big of a risk as it was when it first came out. We now feel that the benefits of meeting in person far outweigh the risks of COVID, so we are meeting in person. We took love into consideration of whether we should be meeting.

b. Love deepens our relationship with God (1 Cor 8:3)

The second reason that Paul gives for taking love into consideration is that love deepens our relationship with God. When you and I respond in love, and make decisions based on love, it deepens our relationship with God. Paul wrote, “but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.” God already knows everything about us, so this is not talking about His knowledge of us. God is telling us that this strengthens and builds our relationship with God. We get to know one another on a deeper level.

(1 Cor 8:3) “but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.”

In Matthew 25, Jesus taught about judgment, and the separation of the sheep from the goats. When the righteous appeared before God and asked when they had fed Him, given Him a drink, or clothed Him, the King replied, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.” Paul wrote that when we sin against the brethren, and wound their conscience, we are sinning against Christ. When we love our brethren and take them into consideration, and limit our freedom to love and protect them, we are doing that unto the Lord. God loves and appreciates that.

(Matt 25:40) “The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’”

(1 Cor 8:12) “And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”

Paul said that food will not commend us to God, whether we eat it or abstain from it. He wrote that “we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.” However, when we restrain ourselves as an act of love to God, and to our weaker brother, that honors and pleases God. A number of years ago I was at a wedding anniversary. The host offered me some champagne to celebrate with them. Since I don’t drink alcohol, I politely declined. The host was not happy about me declining the wine, and started to pressure me. I knew that food or wine does

not commend us to God, and I was neither the worse for not drinking or better for drinking. I also knew that if I took a sip of champagne, it would please the host, and I would not be causing anyone at that celebration to stumble. So, out of love, I took a sip of champagne to honor their anniversary. Many times, acting in love restrains us from a liberty, but there are occasions when acting in love may require us to do something we might not otherwise do.

(1 Cor 8:8) “But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.”

We should reflect on how God loves and treats us. When we see how Jesus humbled Himself, and laid down His position in heaven to come as a man, and as a servant, we will see how we should be acting towards our brothers and sisters. When we have that kind of love and humility, we are known by God.

(Phil 2:5–7) “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, {6} who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, {7} but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”

c. Love considers what is best for others (1 Cor 8:9-13)

Paul concludes by saying that he would never eat meat again if food will cause his brother to stumble. Love considers what is best for others and chooses that course. Love does not seek its own; it always does what is best for others. This is counter culture. The world tells you to look out for number one, and that is you. God tells us to do nothing from selfishness, and to regard others as more important than ourselves. God tells us not to merely look out for our own interests, but also the interests of others. When we are faced with a decision about whether we can do something or should do something, out of love we need to consider what is best for others. A disregard for those around us and how our actions will affect them is selfish and arrogant.

(1 Cor 8:9–11) “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. {10} For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? {11} For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.”

(1 Cor 13:4–5) “Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,”

(Phil 2:3–4) “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; {4} do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

d. Love does not cause others to stumble (1 Cor 8:13)

We must go beyond thinking about others. We should be committed to not doing anything that causes our brother to stumble. Our mindset should be like Paul, who would limit his freedom to eat meat if it would keep his brother from stumbling.

(1 Cor 8:13) “Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.”

Conclusion and Applications

Our passage today is not a comprehensive decision-making procedure. Paul simply says that we should not use knowledge alone to determine whether we should use our liberty or not. We need knowledge. We need to know what God thinks about something. If the scriptures are clear about something, that should be our guide. However, there are some things that are not so black and white, and we need to carefully evaluate whether we should do it or not. In those decisions, we need to use more than just knowledge.

Knowledge can puff us up. Our knowledge is incomplete and we see dimly, even when we think we see clearly. Not all of us are at the same place in our spiritual journeys and not all have the same knowledge. When we act on knowledge alone, we might cause a weaker brother to stumble.

Therefore, we need to walk in love. Love edifies and does what is best for the other person. When we act in love, we are loving Christ; and when we sin against our brother, we are sinning against Christ. We need to limit our freedoms so that we do not cause a weaker brother to stumble. We need to look out for their interests, and look for ways to build them up. In our culture, there are lots of issues that we face on a daily basis. It is October and many people have Halloween decorations up. Many of my neighbors have jackolanterns, which were to scare off evil spirits. Do we participate in Halloween or do we have nothing to do with that holiday? Do we find alternative ways to allow our children to have fun? Do we have trunk or treat, or put on a fall festival?

Christmas will be here soon, and there are some traditions, like Christmas trees, that came from a pagan custom in Northern Germany. Do we put up a Christmas tree?

Many people celebrate Easter, which originated from a pagan spring festival, where eggs, as a symbol of fertility, were offered to a pagan goddess. Do we participate or allow our children to participate in these holidays?

Prayer

Father God, our desire is to love You with all of our heart. Our desire is to love our neighbor as ourself. If we will keep these two commands, we will have kept all of them. Help us to love our neighbors. May all the decisions that we make factor love into the equation. Help us to wise, discerning, and sensitive to where our brothers and sisters are in their walks. May we never do things that cause our weaker brothers and sisters to stumble. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction (1 Cor 8:10, 1 Cor 10:25–27, 1 Cor 8:1–13)

1. Knowledge is insufficient (1 Cor 8:1-4)

- a. Knowledge makes arrogant (1 Cor 8:1, 13:4)
- b. Our knowledge is incomplete (1 Cor 8:2, 13:12)
- c. Not everyone has the same knowledge (1 Cor 8:7, 1 Cor 8:4–13)
- d. Our knowledge can ruin a weaker brother (1 Cor 8:9-11, 1 Tim 1:18–19, Mark 9:42)

2. Love is the best guide

- a. Love edifies (1 Cor 8:1)
- b. Love deepens our relationship with God (1 Cor 8:3, Matt 25:40, 1 Cor 8:12, 8:8, Phil 2:5–7)
- c. Love considers what is best for others (1 Cor 8:9-11, 13:4-5, Phil 2:3-4)
- d. Love does not cause others to stumble (1 Cor 8:13)

Conclusion and Applications