

1 Corinthians 8-10 Bible study

“Does the Bible Allow it?”

How do you as a believer make decisions? This week we are going to look at five steps to take on the road to making the right choices in light of God’s Word. Of course, the first question we should ask ourselves is “*Does the Bible allow it?*” This question must take into consideration both the commandments of God and the freedoms found in Christ. Consider for a moment the commandments that surround the decision you are trying to make. Is there a commandment that comes into conflict with you doing the thing you are deciding to do? If there is no commandment against it then you can consider is it a freedom of mine as a believer?

The freedoms we have thanks to the blood of Jesus are the important never to forget. Here is a list of freedoms that every believer should know about:

1. **Freedom from guilt.** “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).
2. **Freedom from shame.** “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame” (Rom. 10:11).
3. **Freedom from God’s wrath.** “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9).
4. **Freedom from fear of death.** “But has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).
5. **Freedom from bondage to sin.** “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).
6. **Freedom from the curse of the law.** “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13).
7. **Freedom from legalism.** “Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).
8. **Freedom from Satan’s dominion.** “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13).
9. **Freedom to approach God.** “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19).
10. **Freedom to relate to God as His child and His heir.** “you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:7).
11. **Freedom to partake and enjoy every spiritual blessing.** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).
12. **Freedom to bring our concerns and requests to God.** “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

Which of these freedoms do you struggle the most with living in?

If the Bible allows us to do something, by not forbidding it or by commanding it, then the answer to the first of our questions, “Does the Bible allow it?” is yes, and from there we move on to the next question.

“Does my conscience allow it?”

The next question to ask yourself is, “*Does my conscience allow it?*” We have a moral compass as a part of our image bearing, and while we have freedom in Christ, not all things are beneficial to the spreading of the gospel and the love of the body. So, let’s look at 1 Corinthians 10:23 – 33:

“Everything is lawful,” but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is lawful,” but not everything builds others up. ²⁴Do not seek your own good, but the good of the other person. ²⁵Eat anything that is sold in the marketplace without questions of conscience, for the earth and its abundance are the Lord’s. ²⁷If an unbeliever invites you to dinner and you want to go, eat whatever is served without asking questions of conscience. But if someone says to you, “This is from a sacrifice,” do not eat, because of the one who told you and because of conscience— ²⁹I do not mean yours but the other person’s. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? ³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I blamed for the food that I give thanks for? So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Do not give offense to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also try to please everyone in all things. I do not seek my own benefit, but the benefit of many, so that they may be saved.” (1 Corinthians 10:23–33)

In verse 27, why do you think Paul says that when invited to eat dinner at someone’s house you should eat without asking a question of conscience?

Verse 27 sets up a scenario in which an unbeliever invites you to dinner. This unbeliever might be serving food that was previously seen as unclean, for example food sacrificed to idols. Take a look back at 1 Corinthians 8:8. *What does it tell us about eating food for idols?*

Paul tells believers that it isn't a question of their own conscience when it comes to eating food sacrificed to idols because he's already established that all food is okay for believers to eat. What he is suggesting is that the conscience of the others at the table should be taken into account. *In what way does this then affect our own conscience? In other words, how do we decide if our conscience allows a thing?*

What does Paul say is the goal of his action, and therefore his choices? (see verses 29-33)

In our modern world an example of the conscience convicting us to not participate in something that is permissible might be having a glass of wine. (see 1 Timothy 5:23) Drinking wine is permissible, but if you were at dinner with a recovering alcoholic your conscience might say no to drinking wine.

What is the effect on other Christians?

And so, we ask our next question. If your conscience allows it, then "*What is the effect on other Christians?*" We are allowed to eat food sacrificed to idols without worshipping those idols, so, in this scenario, when the believer was invited to eat the meat sacrificed to idols, their conscience would not have convicted them.

The Corinthians were very set on their liberties and freedoms. A popular slogan at the time Paul wrote this letter was, "All things are lawful for me." Here Paul explains how things might be lawful for you but that doesn't mean they are beneficial for the body. *What is the deciding factor in determining if something that is lawful is beneficial according to verses 23- 24?*

Paul reinforces this idea in Romans 14:14-23. Take a look at what he says about distressing a weaker brother or sister.

*"I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean in itself; still, it is unclean to the one who considers it unclean. ¹⁵For if your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. **Do not destroy by your food someone for whom Christ died. Therefore, do***

not let what you consider good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For the one who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by people. ¹⁹So then, **let us pursue what makes for peace** and for building up one another. ²⁰**Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.** For although all things are clean, **it is wrong to cause anyone to stumble by what you eat.** ²¹It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith you have, keep to yourself before God. Blessed is the one who does not judge himself by what he approves. But **the man who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not do so from faith, and whatever is not from faith is sin.**” (Romans 14:14–23)

What do we learn here about our liberties and the responsibility of practicing those liberties in front of other believers or abstaining?

Love is more important than the freedom to do what you want. If you act on your freedom without any regard for other believers, it is unloving. Let’s look at 1 Corinthians 8:9-13:

“With regard to food sacrificed to idols, we know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If someone thinks he knows something, he does not yet know to the degree that he needs to know. But if someone loves God, he is known by God. With regard then to eating food sacrificed to idols, we know that “an idol in this world is nothing,” and that “there is no God but one.” If after all there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we live, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live. ⁷But this knowledge is not shared by all. And some, by being accustomed to idols in former times, eat this food as an idol sacrifice, and their conscience, because it is weak, is defiled. ⁸Now food will not bring us close to God. We are no worse if we do not eat and no better if we do. ⁹But be careful that this liberty of yours does not become a hindrance to the weak. ¹⁰For if someone weak sees you who possess knowledge dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience be “strengthened” to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹So, by your knowledge the weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed. ¹²If you sin against your brothers or sisters in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³For this reason, if food causes my

brother or sister to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause one of them to sin.” (1 Corinthians 8:1–13)

In this passage we see Paul addressing those who know the law and know what their liberties. He tells them that all this knowledge has the tendency to puff us up. *Why would you think he says that knowledge puffs up while love builds up?*

Knowledge tends to bless the one who knows, while love always seeks to bless others. *What are some ways exercising our rights might keep us from loving others?*

Why does it say a weak conscience might defile a person in verse 7?

What does this passage tell us about loving those who don't feel they have the same liberties we have? (see verses 9-13)

What does he call the action of acting on your freedom in the face of someone who doesn't have that same kind of freedom? (see verse 12)

What is the solution to this dilemma of liberty? (see verse 13)

What is the effect on non-believers?

If you've answered 'yes' to the previous questions, now it's time to ask yourself the question, "*What is the effect on non-believers?*" As witnesses for Christ, our position is one of ambassador. That means that as a representative of Christ our freedom can negatively affect our sharing the gospel with non-believers. So, let's look at the effect our liberties may have on non-believers:

“9For since I am free from all I can make myself a slave to all, in order to gain even more people. To the Jews I became like a Jew to gain the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) to gain those under the law. To those free from the law I became like

one free from the law (though I am not free from God's law but under the law of Christ) to gain those free from the law. To the weak I became weak in order to gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by all means I may save some. I do all these things because of the gospel, so that I can be a participant in it." (1 Corinthians 9:19–23)

In Verse, 9 in what way and to what end does Paul use his freedom?

The gospel is more important than our rights. If practicing our rights has a negative effect on non-Christians, then we are ignoring the gospel. We are to draw others to Christ, but if our actions are unloving, unkind, angry, volatile, then how easy will it be to lead them to Christ?

This week, in what ways can you become weak to the weak and under the law to those who are under the law?

What is the effect on my spiritual life?

If asking these questions has made life a little more difficult for you then remember that your spiritual health is more important than your personal freedom. As you practice these steps for making decision, your spirit will grow stronger and more reliant on the power of God. So, the final question to ask yourself is, *'What is the effect on my spiritual life?'*

This week, as you move around your home and community, ask yourself these five questions before you act on your freedom.

1. Does the Bible allow it?
2. Does my conscience allow it?
3. What is the effect on other Christians?
4. What is the effect on non-Christians?
5. What is the effect on my spiritual life?