

SERMON APPLICATION GUIDE

1 CORINTHIANS: A BEAUTIFUL MESS

1 Corinthians 8:1-3

DISCUSSION 1: THE CONSCIENCE

1. Why is talking about the conscience and Christian Liberty important for us as a church and as individual Christians?
2. What might be some common misunderstandings of the conscience and how it works?
3. What are ways our conscience can be misinformed, self-justifying, untrained, or centered on the self? What are some of the dangers of a conscience not shaped by the gospel, submitted to God, and willing to serve and love others first?
4. Rather than assuming your conscience is informed by the Bible, how can you intentionally study Scripture to apply biblical truth, principles, or wisdom to all of life? Why is doing so in dialogue with other believers—who might disagree or apply things differently—also important?

DISCUSSION 2: LOVE BEFORE LIBERTY

“For the Corinthians ‘knowledge’ (insight) means ‘rights’ to act in ‘freedom’. Thus, for them freedom became the highest good, since it led to the exaltation of the individual. For Paul, the opposite prevails: ‘Love’ means the ‘free giving up’ of one’s ‘rights’ for the sake of others, and life together in community is the aim of salvation. Love, that is care for a brother, determines Christian ethical life, not ‘freedom.’” Gordon Fee

“Christian liberty is an internal thing—it belongs to the mind and conscience, and, has a direct reference to God. The *USE* of Christian liberty is an external thing—it belongs to conduct, and, has reference to man. No consideration should prevail upon us for a moment to give up the *ESSENCE* of our liberty, but, many a consideration should induce us to forego the practical assertion or display of our liberty.” John Brown

1. Read Gal. 5:13-15 and 1 Cor. 8:2, 13. What might it look like to have certain liberties (according to personal conscience) and yet not use those for the sake of guarding, serving, or loving others?
2. What are questions we might ask ourselves to give pause and consider if we’re more concerned about serving and loving others or exercising our rights and freedoms?
3. Why are the guardrails of seeking to honor God and seeking to love others so helpful in a day when we’re encouraged to see ourselves as autonomous individuals who must always be who we are, put self-expression ahead of self-denial, and express what we feel like we have freedom to do?

DISCUSSION 3: WEAKER AND STRONGER

1. Did Paul view eating meat as a sinful act (in and of itself) or something Christians are free to do? Does that change if a weaker brother or sister or view the act as sin (meaning is it sin for them if they think it is wrong but go ahead and do it)?
2. When it comes to expression of our liberties between the strong and weaker brother or sister, must the strong give up their freedom altogether or is it primarily in reference to when they're around the weaker brother or sister? Why might that be important?
3. Why is it important we not judge others in matters of personal conscience as well as cultivate humility and love? What are ways to do this?
4. What is one way you can respond to or apply what we've seen so far in 1 Cor. 8?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Christian Liberty

- ["4 Principles for the Exercise of Christian Liberty"](#) by Sinclair Ferguson
- ["A Gospel-Centered Church Understands the Place of Christian Liberty"](#) by Erik Raymond
- ["Pastor, Defend Christian Liberty"](#) by Caleb Greggson
- ["Christian Liberty"](#) by Dan Dodds in *Tabletalk*, June 2019.
- [*On Christian Liberty*](#) by Martin Luther
- Jonathan Leeman seminar (audio) on ["Pastors, Politics, and Christian Liberty"](#)

Conscience

- [*Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ*](#) by Andy Naselli and J. D. Crowley. You can read a [review of this book](#) by Mitch Chase.
- ["12 Principles on How to Disagree With Other Christians"](#) by Andy Naselli
- ["Politics, Conscience, and the Church"](#) by Jonathan Leeman or [*How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?*](#)
- ["Christian Conscience and Preference"](#) by Ryan Eagy
- (Video) ["Applying the Bible to Conscience Issues with Andy Naselli"](#) by Logos