

Living Free in a Community of Grace: When Christians Disagree

Romans 14:1-12

When disagreements occur, evaluate these two areas

- The Issue: Is it a matter of 'opinion' or a clear command from God? Romans 13:8-14:1

'Opinion' =

- The People: Are they young in their faith or mature followers of Jesus? Romans 14:1-2

Romans 1 – How to determine which biblical issues are most important (See *Digging Deeper on back*)

When disagreements occur over 'opinions', respond this way

- You are to accept each other and not judge or hold with contempt anyone you disagree with.

Romans 14:1, 4, 10, 13

"Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions."

"Accept" =

- Admit that we have all freedom in 'opinion' issues. Romans 14:3-5

"The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him."

Conscience issues: I Corinthians 8:7-9; I Timothy 4:1-4

- Examine your motivation behind the claim of freedom to assure that you are not doing it for selfish reasons, but for the Lord. Romans 14:6-9

"For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord"

I Corinthians 10:23-11:1 (See *Digging Deeper on back*)

- Obey these truths because we all will be held accountable before our Lord. Romans 14:10-12

"But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

II Corinthians 5:10

Corporate Prayer Response:

In our differences of worship styles and Church practices... *May we be a community of grace*

In our differences of age, backgrounds and interests... *May we be a community of grace*

In our diversity of spiritual gifts, vocational callings and future goals... *May we be a community of grace*

For the sake of unbelievers here in Orange County and the world... *May we be a community of grace*

For the sake of future generations that follow us here at Calvary Church... *May we be a community of grace*

Because of the amazing grace we have received thru Jesus Christ... *May we be a community of grace*

Digging Deeper

All: How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in peace! (Psalm 133:1)

One of the most painful things Christians experience is when they are in conflict or disagreement with each other. Whether going through a divorce or trying to survive a church division, believers often become disillusioned and cynical when attempting to be restored and love one another. The first century church struggled with these same issues as we do today. That is why Paul included his counsel in Romans 14. This chapter addresses the problem of disagreements, judgmentalism and failure to accept and love one another because of conflict over specific issues.

LifeGroup Discussion:

Consider a time when you disagreed with another believer or found yourself in conflict because of some issue. How did you feel? What did you do in response?

The primary issue that caused disagreement in the Romans church was over “opinion” regarding eating meat or just vegetables. The struggle was not because some were vegans and had some health or spiritual reason that all should live that way. Rather, it likely was over the fact that some meat had been offered to idols which new believers would not eat because they had just left behind that old way of life. Therefore, they were only going to eat vegetables to keep a clear conscience and assure they were not participating in idol worship. Other believers did not see anything wrong with eating meat because idols are just stones. Meat offered to them is still just meat, so they believed it was fine to eat it. The clash comes when these two groups begin to judge, hold in contempt or not accept each other because of their personal convictions. As Paul addresses this issue, he provides principles to guide us in matters of “opinions.”

Consider the following three levels of importance in Romans 1. Do you agree or disagree that they are not equally important? Why or why not? What other issues are foundational? What issues are incidental?

Not all biblical issues are of the same importance. One example is in Romans 1.

Level 1: Romans 1:1-10 reveals some foundational issues such as global evangelism and prayer that we all must support. The eternal value on this issue is great.

Level 2: Romans 1:11 offers a lesser issue for which Paul longs to come to them for encouragement. That is important, but the eternal value is just good. Everyone, including nonbelievers, long to see people for encouragement, but on its own, it is not as important as global evangelism that changes lives.

Level 3: Romans 1:13 and 15:22-25 reveal an incidental issue—Paul’s travel plans. He planned to come but was prevented; he may go to Spain but now may go to Jerusalem and may see the Romans in passing. Such plans can change or be delayed, but no violation of Scripture is at risk.

To guide your motivation in choosing areas of freedom, read 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 and use the following questions to determine if your use of freedom is right or wrong. This prevents you from offending another or being judgmental in areas of freedom.

- Is it profitable? (v.23)
- Will it edify another? Who? (v.23)
- Am I seeking the good of my neighbor or just my own good? (v.24)
- Is your conscience free in using your freedom? (v.27)
- Will you offend a brother? (v.27-29)
- Will it bring glory to God? (v.31)
- Are you seeking your own “profit” or the salvation of others? (v.33)
- Do you want others to imitate your behavior? (Romans 11:1)

Next Steps:

1. **Place your faith in Jesus today!** Read through the booklet called “The Way to Connect with God”, available in the seat rack in front of you. You can also meet with someone from our Prayer Team at a Prayer Point during worship or after service.
2. **Join a LifeGroup** to discuss how these principles can guide you and answer questions that might arise. These are not always clear issues to understand or live by. To find out more about LifeGroups, contact Laura Copeland at 714.550.2398 or visit calvarylife.org/lifegroups
3. **Pursue relationship reconciliation through counseling.** To find out more about the Calvary Life Counseling Center, contact Care Ministries at



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July 13, 2014
Celebration | 8:45 am
Pastor David Mitchell