

**Getting It Wrong Even When You Are Right
(April 19, 2020 1 Corinthians 8:1-13)**

Getting It Wrong Even When You Are Right

— 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 —



Over the past two months I have been involved in a series of discussions and theological debates I never envisaged being part of.

As Elders we had to make decisions along the lines of:

- Is it acceptable to take our Sunday Services online?
- If so – which is more edifying – live streaming with its glitches or pre-recorded with its loss of togetherness?
- Do we use pre-recorded music that has a full band or follow the restrictions on the number of people and just have two live musicians?
- Is it biblically permissible to celebrate the Lord's Table online?

These have been interesting discussions – that not just our church but churches around the globe are having.

I have to say the discussions our Elders had were incredibly encouraging as were most online. But there were some online discussions that were less encouraging.

They laid out their theological points – and then made it clear that if you disagreed you were wrong – in fact if you were a part of a church that came to a different conclusion – you should leave that church.

I found myself asking – is this really the time and place to draw such hard lines?

And I believe that the passage we are beginning this morning shows that Paul would ask that same question.

Too often we can apply knowledge without much love.

Here is what our passage teaches:

In grey areas ask, does it love others and glorify God?



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You can make a decision that you justify theologically, can attach ten verses to, can find five prominent theologians who agree with you – but in *how* you treat your brother or sister, in how you treat the church and how you show the world the love of God – you can get it wrong even when you are right.

Applying principles too rigidly and without grace can affect our testimony, our relationship with other churches and with other Christians.

History tells us it can tear churches apart. It can tell a watching world – this group does not have love.

And that is exactly what was brewing in Corinth.

It has been awhile since we were last in the book of 1 Corinthians.

But if you think back, we have seen that this book – deals with a variety of issues and Paul instructs them by finding a way to bring each issue back to the cross.

Paul's answer to every issue is:

Cross-centred wisdom for flawed saints.

Paul consistently preached Christ and the cross.

We have seen that 1 Corinthians divides up fairly basically.

Introduction 1:1-9

Response to reports 1:10-6:20

Response to questions 7:1-16:9

Conclusion 16:10-24



Introduction 1:1-9

Response to reports 1:10-6:20

Response to questions 7:1-16:9

Conclusion 16:10-24

After the introduction we have the response to the reports which came from Chloe's people.

They told Paul about the divisions in the church and the disorders in the church.

Then we began a long section from 7:1-16:9 where Paul writes responses to a number of questions.

Paul uses a Greek term – *peri de* – **now about** – to signal each of the questions the Corinthians asked.

They asked these questions:

- What is the best way to handle immorality?
- What to do with virgins?
- What to do with food that has been offered to idols?

- How to understand spiritual gifts?
- How to view the collection for the saints?

What Paul does with each question – is to give a principle.

He then applies the principle to the question the Corinthians raised.

And then he applies that principle more broadly.

Importantly – these are principles not rules.

What this means is that depending on the circumstances – the principles will lead you to different actions.

This morning we come to the third question the Corinthians asked.

- What to do with food that has been offered to idols?

Paul makes it clear – this is not a – you *can eat* or you *can't eat* question.

Depending on how it impacts others – will lead us to different actions.

So, if you have your Bibles please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 8:1:

Now about food sacrificed to idols.

The Corinthians asked him how they were to handle the question of Christians dealing with food that had been sacrificed to idols.

His answer takes four chapters – chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11.

The *next* question Paul deals with is all the way over in chapter 12 verse 1 – where they ask *about spiritual gifts*.

You wonder how Paul can need four chapters to deal with this one obtuse question?

And at first glance Paul's answer seems to be difficult to follow. It seems he gets side-tracked and deals with a variety of issues unrelated to the question.

To give you some idea of the difficulties, just listen to 1 Corinthians 8:1–3:

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it. But if anyone loves God, he is known by him.

This seems a very strange couple of verses.

Here, Paul introduces a new section where he says he will answer a question regarding food offered to idols.

But it looks as if Paul introduces the topic and then goes off on a tangent about knowledge and only gets back on track in verse 4.

Then chapter 9 seems to be a total digression. He talks about his rights as an Apostle and says **nothing** about food offered to idols.

And in chapter 10 he seems to divert again – talking about the wilderness experiences of Israel, idolatry in general and then finally in verse 23 of chapter 10 he seems to get back to the question of food offered to idols.

And chapter 11 seems to have no relation to the question.

Many commentators think Paul darts all over the place and is **not** giving one coherent answer in chapters 8-11.

I disagree.

I see chapters 8-11 as one coherent answer.

Why do I say this is all one unit? Throughout all of these chapters – Paul is dealing with the principles behind food offered to idols – and as well, crucially there are similar words and phrases and themes used throughout that link them together.

Words like **rights** and **builds up** and **knowledge**.

Here is how I see this section laying out:

Use your rights to love others and glorify God

In grey areas (8:1-11:1)

Chapter 8:1-9:27 Use your rights to love others

8:1-13 Example 1 – Food sacrificed to idols

9:1-27 Example 2 – Paying spiritual workers

Chapter 10:1-11:1 Use your rights to glorify God

10:1-23 Example 1 – Israel's Choices

10:24-11:1 Example 2 – Conscience Choices

In black and white areas (11:2-34)

11:2-16 Example 1 – Women and worship

11:17-34 Example 2 – The Lord's Table



The overall principle: Use your rights to love others and glorify God

Eating food offered to idols is not a yes you can or no you can't answer. You have to use your rights to decide if you will eat or not eat.

How you should decide is by asking – will my choice allow me to love others and glorify God?

8:1-11:1)

Chapter 8:1-9:27 Use your rights to love others

8:1-13

Example 1 – Food sacrificed to idols

9:1-27

Example 2 – Paying spiritual workers

Chapter 10:1-11:1 Use your rights to glorify God

10:1-23

Example 1 – Israel's choices

10:24-11:1

Example 2 – Conscience choices

In black and white areas (11:2-34)

11:2-16

Example 1 – Women and worship

11:17-34

Example 2 – The Lord's Table

My understanding of chapter 11 is that Paul wants us to know – *not everything is grey.*

Some issues are black and white – no debates allowed.

But, where the issue is a grey – different Christians might give different answers – Paul gives a principle: **Use your rights to love others and glorify God**

What Paul is trying to teach us is that there is a spectrum of moral action.

At one end there are things a Christian can't do – they are simply wrong. You can't commit adultery or steal.

At the other end there are things a Christian must do – they are necessary.

But in between there is a spectrum.

And you and I live most of our life on this spectrum.

Most of the decisions you and I will make in our life are not absolutely right or wrong.

Some of them have **no** moral implications – do I wear the black socks or the blue?

But many choices we face **do** have moral and ethical and wisdom implications.

What makes these decisions so hard is that often there are a number of principles at play that need to be weighed up.

When Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill all the male Jewish babies who were born – they faced a dilemma. They chose to disobey.

Later Pharaoh asked – did you kill the male Jewish babies as I commanded? They had another choice – lie to protect the infants. Tell him – oh you know these Jewish women are strong they have their kids before we can get there – or tell the truth and put the children at risk.

They lied. Even today – theologians debate whether they did the right thing.

How do you weigh these various principles?

If I asked you – is it OK for Christians to be involved in online war gaming? – I would get 20 answers.

It depends on how disciplined you are, what game it is, how graphic, what your wife thinks, whether you are a parent, what your role in church is, who you play with, whether it brings out the worst in you.

There is no easy – yes or no absolute answer.

In our passage – Paul says – one of the tools to help you weigh things up is that you ask – *do my actions love others and glorify God?*

Basically Paul is telling us to apply the Great Command – love God and love your neighbour. We need to ask – what will most clearly show love to others and bring glory to God?

So Paul directs us to:

Use our rights to love others and glorify God

Here is the crucial part.

You ask the same question – but apply it in *two different situations* – you get *two different answers*.

Do you eat food offered to idols?

If everybody involved can say – it's just food – idols are just stone – and God is more powerful – then eat the food.

If some involved are worried about its association with demons and their testimony – then don't eat the food.

You can apply good principles – you can make a choice you can justify biblically – but depending on the circumstances – your choice can still be wrong.

There is a key word we need to think about.

It is the word **right**. We find it in 1 Corinthians 8:9:

But be careful that this **right** of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak.

We find it again all throughout chapter 9. Paul talks at length about his rights.

Basically, some in the church said – I have a right to exercise my knowledge as I see fit.

Paul says – the only right you have is the right to use everything you have to love others and glorify God.

Here in chapter 8 – Paul is very clear. Christians should – *use our rights to love others*.

Here is how I understand the outline of chapter 8.

Use your rights to love others and glorify God

In grey areas (8:1-11:1)

Chapter 8:1-9:27 Use your rights to love others

8:1-13 Example 1 – Food sacrificed to idols

Question	Concerning food offered to idols v. 1a
Principle	Knowledge puffs up – love builds up vv. 1b-3
Knowledge that can puff up	Idols are not gods vv. 4-6
Knowledge without love	Can cause a brother to stumble vv. 7-13



Question Concerning food offered to idols v. 1a

Principle Knowledge puffs up – love builds up vv. 1b-3

Knowledge that can puff up Idols are not gods vv. 4-6

Knowledge without love Can cause a brother to stumble vv. 7-13

We begin with the question the Corinthians asked Paul.

What do we do about food sacrificed to idols?

This is not a burning issue for most of us. Rhoi has asked for your 'question of the day' requests and they have piled in. But I looked at them and not one of you asked – *What do we do about food sacrificed to idols?*

So no smartie texting that question in this week.

But – many of you asked – questions like – is it OK for a Christian to ...?

The principles here help us answer that.

Now while food offered to idols wasn't a big issue for you – in Corinth – it was a huge issue.

Corinth was a pagan society. There were idols and temples on every corner. Historians have suggested that much of the meat and a significant amount of other produce was taken to temples to receive the blessing of the gods before it was sold or consumed.

Some of the offering was burned up as a sacrifice to the gods. Some was returned to the worshipper. The priests kept a portion for their own use. But a significant amount was then sold in the marketplace.

This caused a dilemma for those who came to Christ.

If you bought meat in the market – it *would* have most likely been offered to an idol. Even if you bought it elsewhere it *may* well have been previously offered to an idol or a god.

What do you do? Become vegan – buy your own a cow – form a Christian non-idol meat co-op – what do you do?

And, if your non-Christian neighbour invited you to their home – again the meat may well have been ex-offering meat. What do you do – accept the invite or smile and say – sorry I'm pretty sure we have Bible study that night?

If you invite Davos and Alexa – the two new Christians in the church over – do you offer them meat that had been offered in the Temple? It might be no issue to you – but is it an issue for them?

Not only that but in Corinth, eating a meal at the Temple was a common social activity. We go to coffee shops – they met at the Temple.

But if you went to the Temple – the meat was not the only moral issue you would face. In that Temple there were sexual activities and other practices that were anathema to Christians. So, if your family or friends say – hey let's meet at the Temple – should you go – if you do – should you eat – or draw a line and say – no idol meat in the temple of this Christian body thank you?

The question the Corinthians asked has layers of complexity. But so do most of the questions we deal with every day.

- What should I watch on TV?
- What should I do with my money?
- How should I spend my free time?

The way Paul begins his answer seems surprising. Verse 1:

We know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

How does this answer the question? It answers it by giving a principle – **knowledge puffs up – love builds up.**

Knowledge is a key word in 1 Corinthians.

It was an important word in chapter 1.

Later in chapter 12 in particular we find Paul talking about the spiritual gift of knowledge and using very similar terms to here in chapter 8.

It seems that the knowledge Paul is referring to is a reference to those who claimed to have the spiritual gift of knowledge.

Yes you do possess the gift of knowledge – but that the end of the story:

This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.

Facts without love puffs up rather than builds up.

Have you ever met those people in a church who let you know that they are right because they are wiser, older, smarter, more biblical, more experienced – they know what is right – and what you have to do is to listen to them?

Their knowledge does not make you love Jesus more – it just makes you think they are arrogant – puffed up. Their knowledge edifies them not Jesus.

It is not just getting knowledge right – you have to apply it in love.

In the case of the Corinthians – this gift – the knowledge they had – was used to puff themselves up. They knew the right thing to do because God told them.

They sought prominence because they were knowledgeable and wise. There is no love guiding this knowledge so others could be hurt and caused to stumble.

Greeks valued knowledge. It was natural for those in the church to value knowledge. But it led to boasting and divisions and stumbling.

What was needed was love to build up the whole body.

Verses 2 and 3:

If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it. But if anyone loves God, he is known by him.

The true mark of spirituality is **not** possessing a gift – but using it in a spirit of love.

In the context we might have expected Paul to say:

But if anyone loves his brother, this shows his knowledge is true.

But Paul knows that love for others springs from our love for God. We get the vertical relationship right and the horizontal flows.

When our actions are controlled by love – then we prove we are His. By this will all men know that you are My disciples – if you have love for one another.

Pauls says the question to ask is – how can I apply my knowledge so that it expresses itself in love for others?

There were some in Corinth who had knowledge.

Their problem is what they **did** with that knowledge. Because they lacked love – the application led them to act in a way that was wrong.

It seems from the way Paul answered the question that some with knowledge in the church at Corinth – answered the question of what to do concerning food offered to idols like this:

Can we eat food offered to idols?

Of course we can. Our God is true and awesome. Idols are mere bits of wood and stone. You want to eat – eat. I eat.

But this one size fits all answer was causing great harm to *some* in the church. It was causing division and making some violate their conscience.

When we get to chapter 12, Paul is going to say this:

Spiritual gifts without love puffs up the individual

Spiritual gifts with love builds up the church

Here he basically says the same thing

Knowledge without love puffs up the individual

Knowledge with love builds up the church

Be careful how you use your rights, your gifts, your knowledge.

If you know God you will choose to use them to build up the body – not puff yourself up.

Paul then shows what he means. He looks at:

Knowledge that can puff up Idols are not gods vv. 4-6

The problem here was **not** the knowledge the Corinthians had – it was the **way** they applied that knowledge.

In terms of knowledge – their basic facts were right – idols aren't real gods.

Verses 4-6:

About eating food sacrificed to idols, then, we know that “an idol is nothing in the world,” and that “there is no God but one.”

This knowledge of the Corinthians was right.

We can see they are right from the Old Testament.

They are right in that:

An idol has no real existence.

An idol is just wood or stone. Isaiah 37:19:

[Their gods] were not gods but made from wood and stone by human hands.

They were also right in that:

There is no God but one.

Deuteronomy 6:4 is one of the best known verses in Scripture:

Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

There are not many gods – there is only one true God.

They also got this right:

For even if 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. All things are from him, and we exist for him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him, and we exist through him.

Deuteronomy 10:17 says this:

For the LORD your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awe-inspiring God.

Here is the point. There is only one true God. But in the world there are many false gods.

Our God – the true God – is more powerful than the so-called gods.

What does this mean? It seems that some with knowledge in the church at Corinth – answered the question of what to do concerning food offered to idols like this:

Can we eat food offered to idols?

Of course we can.

Idols are mere bits of wood and stone. They are not true gods. And the demons that inspired them – God is Lord of them. Our God is the true and awesome One.

And we are in Christ so they can't affect us.

Food offered to these so-called gods is just food. The food doesn't become demonic. It can't harm us.

So go to the Temple – eat the food – it is nothing. In fact it shows your strength – Christ triumphs over all.

The problem was not knowledge – but application.

This does not work in every situation.

One of the great causes of spiritual disunity, of adversely affecting young believers, of turning unbelievers away from the church is Christians who apply knowledge without love.

Using knowledge so firmly seems arrogant, uncaring and it can be dangerous.

Knowledge without love Can cause a brother to stumble vv. 7-13

Verse 7:

However, not everyone has this knowledge.

Not every Christian sees things the same way.

Some have been so used to idolatry up until now that when they eat food sacrificed to an idol, their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

Some Corinthians came to Christ out of idolatry. They would have eaten many meals in Temples. Probably involving immoral acts. They would have done this to appease the gods and earn favour with them.

It would not be easy for them to go back and eat at a Temple without all those associations flooding back.

To them – the ceremonies at the Temple were real. For them to join in would be to violate their conscience.

Verse 8:

Food will not bring us close to God. We are not worse off if we don't eat, and we are not better if we do eat.

Showing you are able to eat this idol meat does not make you more godly.

Choosing not to eat does not necessarily make you more godly.

The food was not the issue – love was.

Having said that – Paul will later point out that there is another consideration. In chapter 10 – Paul warns that those who choose to eat walk a very fine line. Yes the food is just food, but the Temple worship is in fact demon worship and to partake in the ceremonies means you can actually share the food and drink with demons.

Just because you can flirt with something worldly and not go over the line doesn't make you holy.

It is the – I will go to the R Rated movie but I will close my eyes in the sex scene.

It is the – four wines makes me drunk – so I will only have three and a half wines.

In chapter 10 Paul is going to say this is foolish and you are in danger of being burned.

But here Paul wants them to know the danger is not getting their knowledge – their theology wrong – it is not applying it with love.

On one level they are right – it is just food – it is still just meat – you *could* eat it.

But that is **not** the right question. The real question is *should* you?

Verses 9-11:

But be careful that this right of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, the one who has knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, won't his weak conscience be encouraged to eat food offered to idols? So the weak person, the brother or sister for whom Christ died, is ruined by your knowledge.

While some in Corinth could eat and not see any association with idolatry or violate their conscience – for *other* Christians – they can't separate the eating of the food from the worship of the idols.

They had probably worshipped at the Temples for years before coming to Christ.

They left the world – now they see some mature Christians with the gift of knowledge eating in a Temple – they think they should eat there as well – and it messes them up.

They see it as flirting with idolatry, demons and false worship – yet this is what the godly ones are doing – so they should join in.

Some brothers might even encourage them to show how strong they are by partaking of the meat in the Temple.

Violating their conscience can lead them to stumble – even to leave Christ and return to idolatry. To be ruined.

What is the principle for us?

Use your rights to love others and glorify God.

And we could add:

Pushing the limits of your rights can be a danger to others.

In grey areas – what should I do – what is permissible? – Too many Christians only ask – can **I** handle this?

Later in this answer Paul is going to say – don't push the line – don't try and work out just how far you can go morally.

But here – he says – don't just ask – is it OK for me – ask – how might it affect others?

Here at Grace Bible Church – we are part of a diverse body.

Many here grew up in great homes without much worldliness.

But many others of us came to Christ out of some bad places – sex, drugs, occult, alcoholism, violence.

And most new Christians are somewhat legalistic. They swing the pendulum way over to the side away from the world. That moderates with time – but they start off saying everything with even a smell of the world is wrong.

As a brand-new Christian I burned my entire record collection – and truth is most of it was pretty innocuous. But at the time it seemed to me – if it wasn't Christian – it was worldly.

Play the Beatles backwards and there are Satanic messages.

Some practices – are not sin in and of themselves – but can push the line for other Christians. It can bring back thoughts, emotions, memories – that might cause them to stumble.

It can tempt them back to the world. It can make them question what is true. It can lead them away from Christ.

You might be fine with a wine with dinner. But does that mean you should serve an ex-alcoholic a wine with their dinner?

You might be fine with a movie with a few racy bits – although as we will see in chapter 10 – maybe not as fine as you think – but perhaps you shouldn't play the movie for someone who struggled with immorality.

These might be things that are neither here nor there for **you** – they don't cause **you** to stumble – but they might make your brother stumble.

Jesus tells us to consider the rights of others first. To love them. Not to show off how strong we are.

What is the great commandment?:

Love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind.

And love your neighbor as yourself.

This is an outworking of this command.

The truly mature Christian does not just ask – is this theoretically acceptable – can I do it? The mature Christian asks – does love for God and my neighbor mean there are reasons I should **not** do this?

Verse 12:

Now when you sin like this against brothers and sisters and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ.

When you cause a brother to stumble – you sin against Christ.

You may have been technically right – but you are wrong – very wrong – in that you applied it without love.

Verse 13 – what does knowledge with love say?:

Therefore, if food causes my brother or sister to fall, I will never again eat meat, so that I won't cause my brother or sister to fall.

Don't mistake what Paul is saying. Since eating meat *might* cause a brother to stumble – everyone should be vegan.

No this is hyperbole. Paul is saying – I would rather never eat meat again than cause a brother to stumble.

If you know a brother or sister has had trouble in certain areas – choose not to make an issue of it.

The question Paul answers in this section is what to do concerning food offered to idols.

That question is probably fairly irrelevant to us. But the principle behind it applies to everyone.

Knowledge tells us our rights.

Love tells us whether to use or forgo these rights.

Knowledge without love puffs me up.

Knowledge with love builds the church up.

How does this apply to us?

There are ethical questions that Christians constantly debate.

Is it right for a Christian to drink alcohol, use marijuana, smoke tobacco, get a tattoo, watch R Rated films?

What is right sexually, financially, physically?

Can a Christian be an environmentalist, a pacifist, join the army?

Can a Christian vote Green?

You only need to spend a few minutes on Google to see how varied the opinions of Christians are on just about everything.

Whenever I preach on a morally grey area – the questions roll in. *OK so does that mean I can ...?*

They describe something in detail and ask – so is it permissible for a Christian to do this?

In some ways I think it is fine to ask these questions.

But, what Paul wants to suggest is this. Often the debate centres on what would theoretically be permissible for a mature Christian to do.

Is this movie technically not a sin to watch? Can I make a theological case that this is OK?

How many glasses of wine can I have before it becomes sin?

Theoretically is this an acceptable way to use my money?

But just because you **can** do something does not answer the question of **should** I do it. In chapter 10 we will see Paul gives reasons why it may harm us – why you might not want to do what is technically permissible.

Here he says – maybe you shouldn't do it because it may harm others.

We are all surrounded by others. Our children, fellow Christians – both long-time Christians *and* new converts – unbelievers – neighbours – work colleagues. And they are looking at us. Whether we like it or not they are watching us.

Some are looking to us as examples – if he does it – then so can I.

Others look to us to see if we violate their particular standards – I don't think she should do that. She is a hypocrite.

So just because something might be right for us – it does not mean it won't cause stumbling or offense to others.

Paul is adamant – sometimes we need to forgo our rights temporarily – or even permanently – for the sake of others.

Alcohol might be an example.

I will argue very fervently that the Bible teaches that alcohol is a gift from God for us to enjoy – but drunkenness is a sin.

Jesus created wine and drank wine.

But many Christians come out of churches that teach it is wrong to drink alcohol at all. They were taught that Jesus created and drank unfermented grape juice – He didn't – but that is what they were taught.

Other Christians had problems with alcohol before they came to Christ.

Some young people might not have your self-restraint.

You have every right to drink alcohol as long as you don't get drunk. But I want to suggest there will be times when you should **not** exercise that right.

For some of us – we may choose to permanently renounce that right for the sake of the kingdom.

Let me close by sharing my heart a little here. I believe that the exercise of knowledge without love is a real problem in many churches.

Paul says that knowledge without love puffs up. I have seen knowledge puff up so many men and women – and it is never good.

There are ethical issues that continually divide churches – and people on all sides want to let us know that they are right and we should get on board with them.

Let me give you some examples.

Schooling. Christian, private, public or home – how should godly parents educate their children?

Theology. Is the rapture pre or post trib? Is baptism for infants or believers? Did God create in seven days or 4 billion years? Are tongues still here or did they cease?

Music. Is contemporary music dumbing down the lyrics and melody? Are hymns not touching today's youth? Are drums a worldly instrument?

However you answer these questions – you must not let your knowledge be without love – it can affect your relationships – your witness and the glory of God.

In chapter 9 we will see Paul is even willing to renounce his rights and become a Gentile or a slave for the gospel.

Be Bereans – do your study. But don't let your knowledge puff you up or use it to tear others down.

What I find tragic is that over the years seemingly mature Christians have exercised their knowledge and rights in such a way that they have caused division and stumbling. Others **have** to see things their way.

Is being right so important to you that you will tear down a brother for whom Christ died or cause division in the church?

When you have a morally difficult decision ask – might this cause a brother to stumble? How might others perceive this? How might it affect my witness?

Let me reiterate – sometimes you can get it very wrong – even when you are theologically justified.

Real wisdom is not always about getting it right. Real wisdom is often about choosing what issues you need to take a stand on and what issues you sometimes need to step back and say – I will let that one slide for the sake of the kingdom.

I suspect that the people you admire most in this church are not necessarily the smartest ones who know every answer – but the most gracious and loving ones.

I suspect that the ones who reach the world the best are not the ones with hard line answers on every question – but the ones who have the savour of Christ and grace in their lives.

By this will all men know that you are His disciples – if you have great knowledge? No – if you have love for one for another.

May this be true of us.

Getting It Wrong Even When You Are Right (April 19, 2020 1 Corinthians 8:1-13)

Main Point: In grey areas ask – does it love others and glorify God?

General Questions:

1. Why do you think it took Paul four chapters to answer the question about food offered to idols?
2. What are the principles Paul gives for answering this question?
3. Why are grey areas so hard to answer and potentially so divisive and destructive?
4. Why is knowledge without love so dangerous?
5. Does this mean we should not strive for knowledge, for theological principles?
6. How can our biblically acceptable actions cause a brother or sister to stumble?
7. Why is it more important to ask – should I do it than can I do it?
8. What kind of questions and decisions should we be applying these principles to?

Application Questions:

1. In what areas have you seen Christians act with knowledge but without love? How did this make you feel?
2. What are the characteristics of the truly mature Christians that made you love Christ more? How can you strive for them in your life?
3. How should you handle it when a 'mature' Christian insists on you following their wisdom – when it violates your conscience?
4. Are there areas of your life that are not an issue for you – but might be an issue for others that you may need to change?