

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXIII: Resolving Differences in the Church

TEXT: 1 COR. 8:1-13 (NIV)

1 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge.^[a] Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. **2** The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. **3** But the man who loves God is known by God.

4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all 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 all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

7 But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. **8** But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. **10** For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? **11** So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. **12** When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. **13** Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

Footnotes: a. Or "We all possess knowledge," as you say

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. What does Paul mean when he says, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (vs. 1a)? When can your knowledge or mine get in the way of positive Christian fellowship and oneness? (vv 1-3)
2. How does one get to know God in a fuller, richer, more lasting way? (vs. 3)
3. As we learned in our last study, one of the biggest issues of controversy in the early church was eating meat that had been a part of pagan religious ceremonies. What perspective does Paul give to the issue? (vv 4-7)
4. How are we to treat a brother or sister in the Lord who hasn’t arrived at the same knowledge and understanding of Scripture as we have? (cf, vs, 7a; 9-11)
5. Let’s talk about the conscience (vv 7, 10, 12). What is it? How does it work? Does it ever malfunction? How can it be honed to help us in living a life that glorifies God? (cf. Romans 2:15; 1 Timothy 1:9; Romans 9:1; 1 Samuel 24:5; Acts 24:16; 1 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:5; Hebrew 9:14; 1 Peter 3:16)
6. What principle does the Holy Spirit lay down in vv 12-13 to guide our decision-making with others in mind? Practically speaking, how does this apply to Christians in the 21st century?