

ROMANS 14:13-23
NOVEMBER 21, 2021



FBC SUMMIT STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

In general, do you prefer to make the rules or break the rules?

What do you usually do when you're faced with a rule you don't agree with?

We tend to decide what rules we'll follow in terms of how they challenge or mesh with our personal desires. But the Bible teaches a radically different way to think about rules—how following them or not following them impacts other people. Jesus expects us to put others before ourselves consistently. So it's not about what the rules allow or disallow; it's about what love motivates us to do. This is the lifestyle Jesus calls His followers to live by, as we'll see today in Romans 14.

DISCUSSION

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 14:13-23.

What principle is found in verses 13 and 20-21?

What does it mean to cause someone to stumble?

How can you determine whether an issue really causes someone to stumble versus offending someone who's just legalistic and easily offended, even by innocent things?

What principle do you see in verse 19?

What does it mean to edify someone?

What did Paul mean when he said, "each one should be fully convinced in his own mind?"

Does this mean if you're convinced that sex before marriage or something else that the Bible calls sin is OK, that it is, actually OK? Why not?

How can you know whether or not your belief is based on Scriptural principles and convictions, or if it is a conditioned cultural response?

Respond to the following rule of thumb: When in doubt, don't.

GOING DEEPER

Read John 13:34-35. How do these verses relate to what we discussed today?

What has come to mind that you should avoid because it could become a stumbling block to others or because it doesn't glorify God?

APPLICATION

What is a gray area with which you've wrestled? How does today's passage help you with that?

Do you know what your friends' faith-related strengths and weaknesses are? If you don't know, how can you become more aware? Why is it important that you do become aware?

What is one thing you can do to show love or to encourage another Christian this week?

PRAYER

Pray for love to become the defining characteristic of Summit Students. Pray that our group will allow love to direct our actions and help us choose what's best as we make personal sacrifices in order to strengthen others.

COMMENTARY

ROMANS 14:13-23

14:13. Paul called on mature Christians to lead the way in building unity in the church by refraining from petty criticism of weaker church members. Paul challenged the mature to decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of weaker Christians. The apostle had in mind avoiding any actions that might lead other Christians into sin. Paul urged his readers to always take the path of Christian love over the way of self-interest.

14:14. Paul wasn't urging mature Christians in Rome to follow a principle that he himself didn't follow. He had been persuaded by the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Yet for Paul, the greater issue was helping those Christians who sincerely believed the clean and unclean regulations were still valid. In other words, the most important thing was for believers to care as much for others' consciences to be clear as their own.

14:15. Paul clearly emphasized the importance of striving for peaceful relationships among believers. Mature Christians put the law of love above the law of liberty in situations where their exercise of freedom might hurt or destroy a weaker Christian. Paul reminded his readers that Christ died for weaker Christians too. In light of Christ's redeeming sacrifice, how could mature Christians risk destroying the spiritual growth of another believer over something as inconsequential as what you eat.

14:16. Church members needed to take seriously the impact their conduct could have on their reputations as well as on the church's reputation in the community. Mature Christians were to guard their reputations by giving consideration to how others were impacted by their conduct. If our actions cause weaker Christians (or perhaps unbelievers as well) to criticize our lifestyle, we need to be concerned.

14:17. Paul went on to challenge mature believers to transcend their legitimate Christian privileges, such as the freedom of eating certain foods, in favor of pursuing eternal values. What we eat and drink should never take priority over the pursuit of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.

14:18. By carefully guarding their conduct, willingly foregoing activities that would draw criticism from weaker Christians, the mature would in fact be serving Christ, would be acceptable to God, and would build their good reputation in the community.

14:19. One way to intentionally live out salvation in Christ is to pursue what promotes peace. Paul was exhorting mature Christians to diligently strive for attitudes and actions that would result in church unity. By striving for unity, mature Christians would help their weaker brothers and sisters in Christ grow in the faith too. Likewise, a second way to intentionally live out salvation in Christ is to pursue what builds up other Christians.

14:20-21. Paul was clear that Christlike love, not Christian freedom, was to guide believers in their relationships with fellow church members. Paul commended the choice to refrain from doing anything that caused another Christian to stumble as a noble thing.

14:22-23. Paul called upon stronger Christians to show spiritual discernment about when and when not to display publicly their convictions about these issues. In good conscience they could simply keep quiet about or refrain from doing those things when their actions would cause weaker believers to stumble in their faith. Paul then warned weaker believers, urging them to be sure about their attitudes and actions regarding debatable issues. They too needed to live with a clear conscience and not conduct themselves based on doubts. Paul warned these believers that everything that is not from a conviction is sin.