

How Free Is Free?

SETTING THE SCENE:

1 Corinthians 8, 13:1-3, 1 Timothy 1:5-7, 1 John 2:3-6, 4:19 - 5:3

Love trumps knowledge.

Freedom has two boundaries:

God's commands

Love for others

WHO'S IN THE CROWD, AND HOW DO WE TREAT THEM?

1 Corinthians 8:7-13, Colossians 2:16-23, Galatians 5:1, Romans 14:1-23, Luke 17:1-4,
Galatians 2:11-14, 3:1-5 (adapted from Dr. Lawrence Osborne)

- ▶ The Strong Christian:

- ▶ The Truly Weaker Brother:

- ▶ The Professional Weaker Brother:

- ▶ The Phantom Weaker Brother:

PAUL'S EXAMPLE:

1 Corinthians 9

He chose personal sacrifice over personal rights.

"It's not what I can gain, but who I can gain."

TAKING IT HOME:

Beware of the two extremes:

Legalism

Excess Liberty

Growth Group Homework

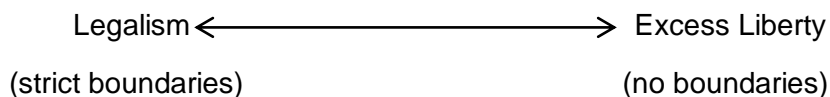
For the week of October 18, 2009

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching on *How Free is Free?*, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. When you were young, where did the family you grew up in tend to land on the continuum below? How does this compare with your current family?



2. As you think of people who have influenced your desire to be a Christian, what things did they do that you appreciated?

Can you think of anything that people did that had a negative impact on you?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Chris suggested that we all strive to be what he called the “strong Christian” when it comes to how we handle gray areas. How do the following verses describe the attitude and actions of a “strong Christian”?

Romans 14:19-21

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. [20] Do not

destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. [21] It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. [NIV]

Romans 15:1-3

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. [2] Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. [3] For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." [NIV]

Let's suppose you are about to see an R-rated movie, or order an alcoholic drink, or _____ (fill in the blank with something else that applies to you), and a friend showed up who you know has struggled in this area in the past. How could you apply the principles in these verses to that situation?

What would your response be if you knew your friend didn't struggle with this area, but had strong opinions about others not being involved in it?

2. We saw in 1 Corinthians 9 how far Paul was willing to go to reach people with the Gospel. His willingness was based on his understanding that people are spiritually lost without Christ. What do we learn about Jesus' attitude about lost people in Matthew 9:35-38?

Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. [36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. [38] Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." [NIV]

In Luke 15:1-10, Jesus tells two stories which give us some perspective on how God views people who are spiritually lost. As you compare the two stories, what do you notice about spiritually lost people and God's attitude towards them?

Luke 15:1-10

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. [2] But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

[3] Then Jesus told them this parable: [4] "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses

one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? [5] And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders [6] and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' [7] I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

[8] "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? [9] And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' [10] In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." [NIV]

What does Luke 19:10 add to your understanding of God's attitude?

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." [NIV]

3. In the previous question, we looked at the spiritual condition of people who don't know Jesus. In our society, many people consider it to be politically incorrect to say that Jesus is the only solution to the "lostness" of people who don't have a relationship with him. How might your co-workers respond if you read the following verses to them?

John 11:25-26

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; [26] and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" [NIV]

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." [NIV]

How can 2 Timothy 2:24-26 help us understand how to share these truths about Jesus with people in a way that is loving?

2 Timothy 2:24-26

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. [25] Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, [26] and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." [NIV]

TAKING IT HOME

1. Is there a gray area Chris talked about (or one of your own) that you've struggled with by being either too legalistic or allowing yourself too much liberty?

Is there anything related to this struggle for which you'd like prayer?

2. In response to this weekend's teaching and study, does anyone come to mind that you'd like to impact spiritually in taking a step closer to Jesus?

If so, can you think of anything you could do or say that might help that happen?

PRAYER REQUESTS