



Jesus is the Answer

LifeGroup Study

2024-03-17

JESUS IS THE ANSWER

Bon Appetit

Leader Notes

OVERVIEW:

Welcome back to our series, Jesus is the Answer. During this four-week series we're looking at 4 major themes in 1 Corinthians that Paul addresses and how Jesus provides the new perspective or answer to them. For week 3 we're looking at 1 Corinthians 8-10. Our topic this week is about the issue of food sacrificed to idols. Paul reminds the Corinthians that while they were free to eat this food, sometimes they should forego eating it out of love for others whose conscience bothered them about eating the food. Like the Corinthians, God has purposed us to enjoy living in the new freedom we have in Jesus. But God has also given us the power to know when to limit our freedom for the sake of others. When should we limit our freedom in order to love others more than ourselves? How can we live in the freedom God has given us, all for his glory? That's what we'll explore in today's study.

ICEBREAKER: If I Had a Free Day I'd ...

Imagine you have a 24 period of time coming up next week that is completely free of any obligations. Your calendar for that day is empty and you have up to \$500 to spend in any way you'd like. What would you do with your day? **Share your story with the group!**

STUDY:

WATCH: Each week of this series, start your study time with this summary of 1 Corinthians.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-corinthians/>

WEEK 3:

The Issue: FOOD – Some of the Corinthians said, “We’re free to eat what we want!”

The Solution: JESUS – Jesus gives you power to limit your freedom for the sake of love.

1. Knowledge PUFFS up. Love BUILDS up.

READ: 1 Corinthians 8:1-3

“Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. ² Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. ³ But whoever loves God is known by God.” NIV

- Paul opens this topic by talking about knowledge and comparing knowledge to love. He says, “We all possess knowledge. But knowledge puffs up ...” **What do you think he means by this?**

LEADER NOTE: “Puffs up” is an English rendering of the Greek verb *physioō*, meaning “to make proud, to cause to become conceited, as if to inflate something with air.” Earlier, Paul commented on the superior knowledge of the Corinthians: “God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge” (1 Corinthians 1:5, NLT). It appears the Corinthians may have grown a little too proud of their intellectual prowess. Paul indicates that knowledge itself was not the answer to the division over food sacrificed to idols. The Corinthians could apply all the sophisticated learning they had acquired to the situation, but that would not help. They needed love.

Source: Got Questions: Knowledge Puffs Up

- **What situations can you think of in our context today where our knowledge may get in the way of loving others?** See if you can come up with two or three examples.

LEADER NOTE: One example might be the consumption of alcohol. Is it OK for a Christian to consume alcohol? Some Christians would say, yes.. They may have studied the bible on this issue and decided they are free to choose. Other Christians may have a moral or physiological reason to say they do not have freedom to consume alcohol. The Christian who has freedom of conscience to consume should be careful not to have the attitude – “I know more about this than you do.” Rather, they should be sensitive to their brother or sister in Christ who has a different conviction about it.

READ: 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 in the New Living Translation

“Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that “we all have knowledge” about this issue. But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens

the church. ² Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much. ³ But the person who loves God is the one whom God recognizes." NLT

- **What insights does this translation give you into what Paul was trying to communicate about knowledge and love?**

LEADER NOTE: In the NLT we read, "... while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church." Paul is not "bashing" knowledge. Paul valued the importance, for example, of learning and studying Jesus' teaching. But he cautions not to allow our knowledge to make us feel important or superior to others, or to become inflated about our knowledge. Paul implores us – "Don't forget about love!" "... it is love that strengthens the church."

2. ONE GOD. ONE LORD

READ: 1 Corinthians 8:4-6

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. NIV

- **Why would Paul build his argument by comparing idols to God?**

LEADER NOTE: In these verses Paul builds his case for saying "idols are nothing" or at least they are "nothing" compared to our God. Rather than allowing ourselves to be swayed by the influence of idols or spiritual forces in our world, we can remember that it is God who has created all things and He is the one whom we worship. Paul compares idols to God as he builds his case to limit freedom for the sake of love.

READ 1 Corinthians 8:7-8

⁷ But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, 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. NIV

- **How do these verses remind us that others may have different convictions than we do?**

LEADER NOTE: In these verses Paul reminded the Corinthians that there were people around them, even other followers of Jesus, who had a different conviction about meat sacrificed to idols. For them, the meat was defiled, and therefore wrong for them to eat. Paul is saying – even though you know this idea about meat sacrificed to idols is not true, still be aware that other followers of Jesus may have this conviction.

3. LIMIT your freedom for LOVE

READ: 1 Corinthians 8:9-13

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

- What application does Paul give here about limiting our freedom for love?

LEADER NOTE: Paul gives the Corinthians a specific application here for how they should limit their freedom for the sake of love. He is saying – if you notice a “weak” brother (maybe a person who is newer to the faith or who has a different conviction than you do) who may be tempted to compromise their conviction by watching your freedom – don't eat the meat! Yes, you will be limiting your freedom, but it is the loving thing to do. Note that Paul says here that if the Corinthians ignored this and ate the meat anyway, they would be sinning against the “weak” brother or sister and they would be sinning against Jesus. Application – skip the meal!

READ 1 Corinthians 8:11-13 in THE MESSAGE

¹¹⁻¹³ Christ gave up his life for that person. Wouldn't you at least be willing to give up going to dinner for him—because, as you say, it doesn't really make any difference? But it *does* make a difference if you hurt your friend terribly, risking his eternal ruin! When you hurt your friend, you hurt Christ. A free meal here and there isn't worth it at the cost of even one of these “weak ones.” So, never go to these idol-tainted meals if there's any chance it will trip up one of your brothers or sisters. THE MESSAGE

- What conclusion does THE MESSAGE give here about limiting our freedom for love?

LEADER NOTE: THE MESSAGE says, “So, never go to these idol-tainted meals if there's any chance it will trip up one of your brothers or sisters.” Don't even have the association of being where these meals are served if it might trip up one of your brothers or sisters. It may be helpful to have your group take time again to talk about how this might apply to our culture today. For example – if a Christ-follower knows that going to the casino could trip up their “weaker” brother or sister, it's probably best to cancel the trip.

4. Giving up my RIGHTS

READ: 1 Corinthians 9:1-18

In this section, Paul talks about his rights as an Apostle. In this chapter he continues the argument he began in chapter 8, that followers of Jesus should be willing to give up their rights (freedoms) for the

sake of loving others. **What examples do you see here of rights that Paul has given up for the sake of the Gospel?**

LEADER NOTE: In this section Paul talks about several rights he could have insisted on as an Apostle. He had a right to stay in their homes and share a meal with them (vs. 4). He had a right to bring a believing spouse along on the journey (vs. 5). Apostles had a right to a harvest of food and drink (vs. 11) They had a right to payment for preaching the Good News (vs. 14).

- **Why did Paul willingly give up all these rights?**

LEADER NOTE: Paul was willing to give up all of these rights for the sake of the Gospel. Paul's satisfaction and "pay" came from doing what God had compelled him to do, the preach the Good News. (vs. 16).

- **See if your group can come up with two or three examples of "rights" we could give up today for the Gospel.**

LEADER NOTE: "Rights" could be any benefit we believe we deserve. We live in a culture that encourages us to stand up for our rights, so to give up our rights is a counter-cultural move. The key idea here is that the getting the MESSAGE about Jesus out the world is worth the cost.

5. Running HARD.

READ: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 THE MESSAGE

¹⁹⁻²³ Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be *in* on it!

²⁴⁻²⁵ You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.

²⁶⁻²⁷ I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No lazy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself. THE MESSAGE

- **What inspires you about Paul's commitment to "run hard" (vs 26) for the Gospel?**

- As a follower of Jesus, God has called you to share the Good News of Jesus. **What key word, phrase or idea from this passage speaks to you about your mission?**

6. For the GLORY of GOD.

READ: 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 NLT

³¹So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³²Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles^[f] or the church of God. ³³I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved. NLT

READ: 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 THE MESSAGE

³¹⁻³³So eat your meals heartily, not worrying about what others say about you—you're eating to God's glory, after all, not to please them. As a matter of fact, do everything that way, heartily and freely to God's glory. At the same time, don't be callous in your exercise of freedom, thoughtlessly stepping on the toes of those who aren't as free as you are. I try my best to be considerate of everyone's feelings in all these matters; I hope you will be, too. THE MESSAGE

- At the end of 1 Corinthians 10 we have Paul's conclusion on the matter of eating food sacrificed to idols. **How would you summarize his conclusion in one sentence?**

LEADER NOTE: In 1 Corinthians 10:31 we read, "... whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." This is Paul's conclusion. Our decisions and actions should be to live for God's glory. This means we don't need to worry about what others think of us. What ultimately matters is that we honour God. THE MESSAGE captures the spirit with which we are to live – "... do everything that way, *heartily* and *freely* to God's glory."

- What key learning point or application will you take from this week's study? **How might this shape your walk with Jesus?**

PRAYER:

Thank God, today, for the freedom we have in Him. Ask Him for wisdom to know when to limit our freedom for the sake of others. Commit again today to do all things for His glory.