

# 1 Corinthians

## 8:1–13

### Introduce

Have you ever been confronted by another believer who thought that some way you were living your life was not godly, even if you were convinced that it was not inappropriate? We're going to address the issue of how to deal with the consciences of other believers.

### Investigate

#### *Background*

This chapter continues Paul's treatment of issues they had written him about, as indicated by the phrase "Now concerning..." Here Paul begins a discussion of how the church is to deal with the food sacrificed to idols. His discussions on idolatry continue through 11:1. The food he is likely speaking of was the food consumed in pagan temples. It is likely that the Gentile believers of Corinth had attended these feasts their entire lives, feasts that were as much social events than religious ceremonies.

#### *Explore the Passage*

##### 8:1–3

- What do we know about the Corinthian church that helps us understand Paul's need to contrast knowledge and love?
- Why does thinking you know something really mean you don't know as much as you should?
- Why does Paul throw in the idea of being known by God if we love God? *[This explains how our love is more important than our knowledge. Even in our most important relationship, our love is more important than our knowledge. Note: There is a textual variant on this verse. The verse may likely read "If anyone loves, this one truly knows." Ask them how this might make the understanding of this sentence clearer.]*
- How do we struggle with the dichotomy between knowledge and love? How are ways that we approach each other in knowledge rather than love?

##### 8:4–6

- Why does Paul take time to address the reality of God's existence in contrast to idols? *[Paul is establishing the basis for how the Corinthian believers are to approach food offered to idols. The existence of God and falseness of other gods is foundational to how they treat this issue.]*
- Paul gives an interesting look at what we know about God the Father and God the Son. What do we learn here about Paul's view of the Godhead? What is the same between these two persons of the deity? What is different?

##### 8:7–13

- Who is Paul referring to in verse 7? Why is his conscience defiled?
- What is Paul's point in verse 8? *[In the issue of food offered to idols, food is not the issue.]*
- What is the danger for those who have a more knowledgeable understanding of food offered to idols? Why is it sin to do something we know to be permitted but that other believers believe to be wrong?

- What is Paul's conclusion on how to deal with these situations?
- What are issues in this campus environment that we must be aware of believers with weak consciences? How should we approach those issues? What is the balance between helping them have a greater understanding of Christian ethics and making sure we do nothing to cause them to stumble?

*Discover the Big Idea*

- What does the issue of knowledge and love that Paul begins with in this chapter have to do with believers with weaker consciences?

Summary: In relationships love is always more important than knowledge and we should always seek to build others up in love rather than focus on our superior knowledge.

**Respond**

- What are ways that you have focused on your knowledge at the expense of building others up in love?
- What is it that causes us to sometimes emphasize our knowledge in our interactions with others rather than focus on building them up?
- How can the truths of Christ's love for us and the knowledge that we sin against Him when we causes others to stumble help us more easily focus on the thoughts and concerns of others?