

Christian Freedom

David Feddes

Touchy issues

- Movies, music, and dancing
- Playing cards and “games of chance”
- Drinking alcohol or smoking
- Sunday shopping and dining out
- Trick or treating
- Fantasy involving magic
- Communion: fermented or unfermented bread, fermented or unfermented wine

Touchy issues

- Public, Christian, or home school
- Standards of modesty
- Dating, courtship, romance
- Contraception and family size
- Patriotism, military, pacifism
- Hindus and vegetarians don't eat meat
- Muslims and Jews don't eat pork

Like-minded to an extreme

Believe as I believe—no more, no less;
That I am right (and no one else) confess.
Feel as I feel, think only as I think;
Eat what I eat; drink only what I drink.
Look as I look, do always as I do;
And then—and only then!—
I'll fellowship with you.

We and They

(Rudyard Kipling)

Father and Mother, and Me,
Sister and Auntie say
All the people like us are We,
And every one else is They.
And They live over the sea,
While We live over the way,
But—would you believe it?—
They look upon We
As only a sort of They!

We eat pork and beef
With cow-horn-handled knives.
They who gobble Their rice off a leaf,
Are horrified out of Their lives;
While they who live up a tree,
And feast on grubs and clay,
(Isn't it scandalous?) look upon We
As a simply disgusting They!

All good people agree,
And all good people say,
All nice people, like Us, are We
And every one else is They:
But if you cross over the sea,
Instead of over the way,
You may end by (think of it!)
 looking on We
As only a sort of They!

Mature Freedom

- All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained (Philippians 3:15-16).
- It is for freedom that Christ has set us free (Gal 5:1).

To do or not to do?

- 1. Mature participant:** I think it's fine for me to do this, but that does not make me superior.
- 2. Mature non-participant:** It's best that I not do this, but I won't judge those who do.
- 3. Immature participant:** I do what I like, and nobody tells me what to do!
- 4. Immature non-participant:** I won't do it, and no *real* Christian would do it.

My own freedom:
using without abusing

1. Will it honor God?
2. Will it trip others?
3. Will it trap me?
4. Will it feel clean?

Will it honor God?

- So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).
- If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord (Rom 14:7-8).
- For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Rom 15:4).

Will it trip others?

- If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died (Rom 14:15).
- Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak... When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ (1 Cor 8:9-13).

Will it trap me?

- "Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything (1 Cor 6:12).
- So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (1 Cor 10:12)
- You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love (Gal 5:13).

Will it feel clean?

- Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin (Rom 14:22-23).
- Why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? (1 Cor 10:29-30).

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Others' freedom: **differing without dividing**

1. Who is the judge?
2. What matters most?
3. What would Jesus do?
4. What advances mission?

Who is the judge?

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand... You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another (Rom 14:1-4, 10-13).

What matters most?

If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in **love**... For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of **righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**... Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to **peace and to mutual edification**... May the God of hope fill you with all **joy and peace** as you **trust** in him, so that you may overflow with **hope** by the **power of the Holy Spirit** (Rom 14:15-19; 15:13).

What would Jesus do?

For even Christ did not please himself ...
Accept one another, then, just as Christ
accepted you, in order to bring praise to
God. For I tell you that Christ has become a
servant of the Jews on behalf of God's
truth, to confirm the promises made to the
patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify
God for his mercy (Romans 15:3,7-9).

What advances mission?

- Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible... I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Cor 9:19,22).
- Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved (1 Cor 10:32-33).

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