

Bridgeway Community Church  
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## **Otherwise**

### **The Other's Conscience**

#### **Faith - Morality - Conscience**

“It is because of our faith, our morality, and our conscience that some people are restricted from engaging in certain behaviors that others may engage in without restriction.”

Question: How do we judge rightly without compromising our faith, morality and conscience?

Question: How do we accept others who have a different conviction than we do?

“Within our faith as Christians, we will not all agree biblically or theologically.”

Why are there so many denominations and different churches? “It’s because believers have not learned how to ‘agree to disagree’ over what is called disputable matters or disputable matters of conscience. In fact, many Christians cannot even agree on what the matters that are disputable are and what the matters that are essentials are.”

For years around here at Bridgeway we have said that we "major on the majors and minor on the minors...I did not want to limit our ability to reach people from any background”

Question: What are the majors?

1. God, the creator
2. Man's sin and fall
3. Man's need for redemption/salvation
4. Jesus, the son of God, as the only savior sent by God the Father to live on earth as a man, die on the cross of crucifixion, and rise again from the dead.
5. The return of Jesus for those who are his to live forevermore with him in heaven.

What are some of the issues that the church of Jesus Christ has allowed itself to divide over?

Baptism, speaking in tongues, gifts of the Spirit, eating of different foods and drinking of alcohol, clothing & dress for women, jewelry, tattoos, hair, hats, halloween, and holidays, worship days, sabbath days, fasting, music styles, hymns, gospel, contemporary, instrumentation versus a cappella, Bible versions, communion rituals, women in leadership, dating, marriage, divorce, remarriage, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, cohabitation, race relations, politics, taking medicine, using marijuana, just to name a few!

Question: “How do we do this thing called church unity? How do we stop from dividing over the issues that...cause us dissension?”

The Apostle Paul was dealing with these same exact issues in the first century church and had to lay down some guiding principles to help the church function as they had to navigate such issues.

Romans 14 NIV84

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. <sup>2</sup> One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. <sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> It is written:

“ ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,  
‘every knee will bow before me;  
every tongue will confess to God.’ ”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way. <sup>14</sup> As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, <sup>18</sup> because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

<sup>19</sup> Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

<sup>22</sup> So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. <sup>23</sup> 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.

The issue the Christians were struggling with was whether you could eat meat because of different dietary laws between the gentile and Jewish Christians.

## The 10 COMMANDMENTS to Help Christians Live Together in Unity over Disputable Matters

### 1. THOU SHALT ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER

Romans 14:1 NIV84

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

Romans 15:7 NIV84

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

“Paul is saying it’s more important to accept people who have a different view than you on the disputable matters than not to. The word ‘accept’ also means the word ‘welcome.’”

### 2. THOU SHALT STOP JUDGING

Romans 14:1,4, 10, 13 NIV84

Accept him whose faith is weak, **without passing judgment** on disputable matters.

**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.

Therefore **let us stop passing judgment on one another.** Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.

### 3. THOU SHALT START LOVING

Romans 14:13-15 NIV84

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. <sup>14</sup> As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. <sup>15</sup> 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.

“Because I have liberty and I can do this - I can eat meat, I can drink wine, I can enjoy X, Y & Z and you can't - to do it in your face means that I am the one guilty of NOT loving...Stop judging and start loving.”

### 4. THOU SHALT PURSUE THE HIGHER CALLING IN CHRIST

Romans 14:17-18 NIV84

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, <sup>18</sup> because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

“The kingdom of God should not be divisive over these matters of conscience. Don't make your church, don't make your Christianity about eating and drinking. Make it about the higher calling in Christ: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

"Don't lower the kingdom of God to the liberties that you have, but elevate it to the love you have for him and others!"

### 5. THOU SHALT MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PURSUE PEACE AND MUTUAL EDIFICATION

Romans 14:19 NIV84

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

“I, as a bridge builder, will make every effort I can to pursue peace with people who may have a different view than I have.”

“Bad Christians are always looking to show what we don’t agree on and why the other person is wrong...then we want to call out people for being wrong instead of standing up for the higher calling of the kingdom: righteousness, love and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

## 6. THOU SHALT NOT DESTROY GOD’S CHURCH OVER “DISPUTABLE MATTERS”

Romans 14:20-22 NIV84

**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. <sup>21</sup> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. <sup>22</sup> So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

“This matters to me and matters so much to me, I think everybody ought to think about it the way I think about it!”

“The next time you feel this conviction to want to make a minor issue a major issue because maybe it grates you the wrong way, I want you to ask yourself this question:

“Is my conviction based on reverence or preference?...The conviction I have is based on reverence for spiritual truth and I believe that the Bible says that this is a major issue OR is it based on personal preference, based on my family upbringing, my education, my cultural norms.”

## 7. THOU SHALT KEEP YOUR BELIEFS TO YOURSELF IF EXPOSING YOUR FREEDOM WILL HURT SOMEONE ELSE

Romans 14:22 NIV84

So **whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.** Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

“There is a difference between discretion and deception.”

“To allow those liberties to come out...to be done anywhere...it doesn't matter where you are or who you're with, you're just going to talk the way you want to talk, you're going to drink the way you want to drink...you're going to do whatever you want to do because you're being 'REAL' is not actually biblical, it is foolish.”

“It's about loving people around you enough, not to cause them to stumble and so discretion is important and there is a difference between discretion and deception. There's a difference between private and secret.”

## 8. THOU SHALT NOT CAUSE YOURSELF TO SIN BY VIOLATING YOUR OWN CONSCIENCE

Romans 14:23 NIV84

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.

“What you can't do is to cause yourself to sin by violating your own faith, morality and conscience...don't violate your conscience because someone else is free.”

## 9. THOU SHALT LOOK OUT FOR THE MARGINALIZED AS A GRACIST

Romans 15:1-2 NIV84

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

“It's not about me, I want to please God, I want to serve you, so what's for your good?”

“As a Gracist, I see who is marginalized and who is uncomfortable...someone is having a hard time with the setting, a difficult time...I'm going to speak up, I am going to shut down the conversation, I am going to escort them out before things go south.”

10. THOU SHALT CHECK YOURSELF WHEN YOUR CONSCIENCE IS CONFLICTED!

Romans 12:3 NIV84

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather **think of yourself with sober judgment**, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Question: What do I do when my conscience is conflicted by someone else's behavior?

REVERENCE: Address it privately with that person about the behavior  
PREFERENCE: If the behavior is not sin, just your personal preference - kindly excuse yourself if you can't keep yourself from judging or being conflicted

"Sometimes the best way to check yourself is to excuse yourself."

Sober judgement. - if you're going to judge, judge YOURSELF and thank God for the grace in your life!

Romans 15:5-6 NIV84

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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9. THOU SHALT LOOK OUT FOR THE MARGINALIZED AS A GRACIST
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