

- ✍ There are many things regarding Christian conduct that are very clearly black and white, stealing, murder, adultery, homosexuality, these are things that the Bible speaks plainly about and are not up for debate. But there are gray areas that the Bible doesn't speak plainly about or does not address at all. These "gray" areas cause a lot of problems because they are left up to preference and opinion because they matter only situationally and not strictly morally. Preference and opinion have divided more people because in our pride we all think that we are right.
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**1. The Corinthian church was rife with division over mostly gray issues.**

- ✓ What they needed was to have these "gray" issues explained in black and white, and we are going use that occasion to set some parameters on our own questions of the "gray." First of all, why is there gray? Isn't everything ultimately black and white? Since the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has been dealing with His people not primarily on the "rule book principle" but on the principle of grace. Secondly, gray issues differ from culture to culture and from time to time. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:1-13, whether or not to eat meat sacrificed to idols is not an issue for us in this culture or time, but it was a big gray issue for them. Gray issues differ from time to time, culture to culture and situation to situation. Times change, cultures change, situations change and that is what makes these gray issues so slippery. We are not directed by a rule book for these issues but are supposed to be directed by the Holy Spirit and the Rule of Love.

**2. What are the real answers to these gray issues? It depends on your answer to some important questions.**

- 1) Does it violate conscience? Does yours or someone else's conscience have a problem with it?
    - ✓ 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:7, 10, if someone was knowingly bothered by their eating of idol meat, they should not eat it, neither should they encourage the person let up and violate their conscience in the matter. So, in not violating what they prefer, we have to violate what we prefer? Yes! We tend to operate more like American than like Christians when it comes to these gray issues, we think that we have a right to do what we want when issues aren't black and white. We ceased to have rights when we came to Christ, Jesus is now our Lord and is the owner and operator of our lives, all our rights bow to Him. We had the right to go to Hell, but He robbed us of that right so that now all our rights are directed by Him alone. We have the right to honor others' rights above our own, and one of those rights is to not have their consciences violated. Romans 14:22-23, does it bother you to do it? (a question of conscience) Don't do it! Do you have an uneasy conscience about it? To you it is sin. Do have to hide it to do it? It's probably wrong for you because it effects your conscience or the conscience of others. Does it bother someone else? Don't flaunt your rights over someone else's will, what you want to do is encourage someone else to do what their conscience says no to? Why is it so important not to violate our consciences? Conscience is a God given safety net that is programmed into us to keep us from harm. When we get comfortable breaking our conscience on gray issues, it makes us more comfortable to break our conscience on black and white issues as well.
  - 2) Does it edify?
    - ✓ We get the word edify from the word edifice, which is a building or structure, so "to edify" is to build up someone. Does what you want to do concerning a gray issue build up or tear down others in the process? 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:1, knowledge puffs up/inflates your courage to do something. "There is no proof of ignorance more common than the conceit of knowledge." "The Bible doesn't say its right!," yes, but it doesn't say its wrong either, it just depends. One of the things it depends on is what love has to say about it. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:2. What to you does love say about it? Does this build up the kingdom of God in their life and yours? Does it tear it down?
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3) Does it cause someone to stumble?, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:13.

- ✓ 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:9, be careful with your freedom; don't mistake it for freedom to sin against someone else. Our real freedom is to no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf. We are free to put others first, that's our real freedom. Don't look at your freedom but look at their need. What do they need you do to help them grow closer to Christ and abide in a deeper relationship with Him? Whatever that is and whatever that takes, it is worth curtailing your temporal freedoms for the sake of their eternal rights.

**"Life is short" and the kingdom of God is too important for us to run over those who need to be lifted up. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:12, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, Jesus gave up all of His rights and prerogatives for us. Our lives in Christ are no longer private but are a public display of His work. There are things we could do but shouldn't. There are places we could go but shouldn't for other's sake, Romans 14:17.**

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