

“In” The World but Not “Of” The World

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Pastor Guy Gray

The Dilemma of Setting Boundaries

The larger issue in 1 Corinthians 8 has to do with where a Christian is supposed to have boundaries in their life when it comes to participating in the practices of the larger culture in which they live. This has been a crucial issue for all Christians through history. It's a huge issue for us as well. Every generation of followers of Christ is faced with this dilemma. It's all about boundaries. How far should we go in participating in the activities and practices of the larger culture? What is OK for a Christian to do and what is sinful or if not sinful, perhaps damaging to our witness for Christ or less than helpful to our experience of following Jesus?

Meat Sacrificed to Idols

The immediate issue at Corinth that raised this “boundary” question was one that is totally foreign to us in our contemporary world—what to do about “meat that has been sacrificed to idols.” For them, this was a huge problem. We need to remember that eating meat in ancient culture was far more rare and expensive than it is for us today. Very often the meat that was consumed had been previously dedicated to some idol in a pagan temple. In addition, this meat was often consumed at special parties or dinners that were the ancient equivalent of business dinners where people would be networking with other key people in the community to cut business deals or rub shoulders with people of influence in the community. So there is more going on here than just going through the drive through window at McDonalds after reading Fast Food Nation (which may be a boundary issue of another kind!)

Hot Topics of “Christian Morality”

In a sense there are always two levels of “Christian Morality” issues. Level 1 has to do with the choices and behaviors that are clearly spelled out in Scripture—things like, don't murder, steal or commit adultery. Those things are perfectly clear. But level 2 issues are not always so clear. Level 2 has to do with choices and behavior that are not clearly spelled out in scripture. These issues often have to do with our level of involvement with the larger culture around us. For the Corinthians this meant where to draw the boundary on eating meat sacrificed to idols. We have different questions. What about smoking, drinking, the kind of movies we watch, getting tattoos, body piercing, the music we listen to, how exactly should or shouldn't Christians dress and the list goes on and on. These are more in the grey area of Christian morality. Yet these questions are important for us because they impact our level of interaction with the larger culture around us. Christians don't always agree on the answers, which means these issues impact the life of the community of Christ in our world and that is of vital concern to us.

Knowledge and Love

So how are we supposed to figure out where to draw the boundaries in the grey areas? Some of the Christians at Corinth thought they had it all figured out. They knew that an “Idol is nothing” in reality and that they weren't suffering any harm from eating this meat. So they became arrogant and ignored the feelings of other Christians who felt differently. Paul shows them that “knowledge” isn't the only thing that matters here. Love has to be mixed with knowledge or else the knowledge is worthless. There is a vital lesson for us here. The answer is not always about who is “right or wrong” in a technical sense. The answer must include a loving sensitivity to the concerns and experiences of other Christians. This makes navigating the Christian life a bit more complicated and calls for even more effort. In our message today we will explore the dimensions of this dilemma and find out how we can live “in” the world, but not be “of” the world (John 17:15-16) while at the same time living in loving sensitivity towards others in the Christian community.

Questions for further Exploration and Discussion:

This week, spend time reading through 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. In general, how does the text speak to your life today?

If you were to identify in your life an issue that is similar to the “meat that has been sacrificed to idols,” what would it be? How have you seen this issue impact your life and faith and the life and faith of others around you?

How has 1 Corinthians 8 informed your decision making when it comes to the “grey” issues?

Is there anything that needs to change in your life today?

SIGN UP TODAY...

Are you plugged in?

This month in the lobby you can get plugged into the community at River West Church. Just put your name in the fish bowl and we will make sure you get “plugged in”

Women’s Bible Studies

Women’s Ministry is offering a variety of studies starting in January 15th. After each service visit the table set up in the fellowship hall to find out more about these upcoming studies.

Financial Peace University

Sign-up today in the Fellowship Hall for Financial Peace. This 13 week class starts February 4th.

Outreach Ministries Drive...

Our Outreach Ministries need your help, this month bring your new or almost new, coats, socks, maternity clothes & sleeping bags, etc... as well as nutritious foods to church.

Friday 1/11

Friday Night Fellowship, 7:00-8:30 @ RWLG

A great opportunity for all 4th & 5th graders to dig in the scripture, grow relationships and encourage each others faith. For more information contact Lindsay at 699.2226 or lindsay@riverwest.org

Sunday 1/13

Student Ministries All City Worship, 7:30-9:00 @ Mt. Park Church

Youth groups will worship together and see the impact when the greater body of Christ comes together in His name. For more information contact Pastor Josh at 699-2226 or Josh@riverwest.org.

Wednesday 1/16

High School Parent Meeting, 7:00-8:00 @ RWLG

Come and learn about some of the changes and events that are planned.