



Session 7

8:1-13

We can only be aware of the things that trigger other people's consciences if we know them, but we have to build relationships in order to know them. It all comes down to having deep, self-sacrificing friendships with other Christians.

Laying down our rights can be hard. But in the long run, it's worth it for others to develop a great relationship with Christ through your example.

1. Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds Up

One of the major issues the Corinthians were struggling with was pride. Paul uses a practical example with the food being sacrificed to idols to explain how their knowledge has made them prideful and affected the community.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1.

According to this verse, what effect can knowledge have?

Knowledge is a good thing, but knowledge by itself can create an attitude of arrogance and a lack of empathy. **What's the godly alternative Paul presents in this verse? What does it do?**

The Corinthians had knowledge, but they struggled to use it with love, and it had a divisive effect on the church. **What does it look like to use our knowledge about certain freedoms to help the church rather than divide it?**

We can tend to think of pride as only affecting our inner life, but, as Paul shows the Corinthians, it also affects the people around us. **What could it look like for you to tackle any pride in your life this week?**

Think about all the areas of your life where pride is evident. Take some time to pray and ask God to forgive you of your pride and to restore a humble heart to you. Write down two or three practical ways you can use your knowledge with love this week.

2. The Shema: "There is no God but one"

Read 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.

What does Paul say about God in these verses?

As Paul discusses the issue of food being offered to idols, he reinforces the idea that there may be many "gods" receiving sacrifices but there is only one God who created all things. Paul references a well-known passage from the Old Testament to make his point.

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

How does God describe himself in these verses? What are his main instructions for the people of Israel?

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is known as the Shema—the basic confession of faith in Judaism. It is part of a series of speeches given by Moses to the people of Israel before entering into the promised land. **Why do you think God would want the Israelites to remember there's one God? How important would the Shema have been for Israel while living among cultures that followed many gods?**

Paul references the Shema to remind the Corinthians there is one God—all idols are false gods. **How could knowing there is only one God impact the Corinthians' understanding of food sacrificed to idols?**

It can be difficult to think about these verses in terms of our lives today. But if we're honest, we all struggle to remember that we serve God alone. We can idolize certain relationships, comforts, or luxuries over God. **If God is one and he wants our entire heart, what have you been putting on a pedestal instead of him? This week, what is one way you can remove any idols in your life?**

3. Peek at the Greek: Conscience

Our conscience is a great tool that God has given all of us. But what does our conscience have to do with following Jesus and participating in the church?

Read 1 Corinthians 8:7-13.

Paul uses the word *syneidesis*, which we translate as "conscience," three times in just seven verses. As our English translation implies, Paul's talking about the part of our brain that distinguishes between right and wrong. **What does Paul say about our conscience in this passage?**

Paul repeats *syneidesis* to emphasize his point—violating your conscience as a Christian is sin. If we think something is wrong and do it, we've sinned against God. **When have you gone against your conscience? What happened? What was the outcome?**

God uses our conscience to help us know right from wrong, provide direction, and keep us sensitive to our own attitudes. **When has your conscience been helpful to you in life? What are some benefits of having a conscience as you make decisions?**

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**What are some activities, attitudes, or situations that trigger your conscience?
What can you do this week to obey God by following your conscience?**