

## 25. Learning to Do All to the Glory of God

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our children learn to understand the importance of helping new Christians separate from false worship. We saw that those who offer sacrifices to idols are actually sacrificing to demons and as Christians we are not to have fellowship with demons. The discussion about things offered to idols led to a related question. Should Christians eat food that had been offered to idols if they were served that food while having dinner at the home of a person that was not a Christian? The principle that Paul gave to the Corinthians in answer to that question will also give our children a principle that will help them to know how to act in many different situations today. That will be the focus of this topic.

Paul began his answer to this question by giving a key principle for all of us to understand. 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 says, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*.” Galatians 3:24-25 says that the purpose of the law is to show us that we are sinners and need to come to Christ. However, once we come to Christ we are no longer under the law because we can never grow in our spiritual lives by trying to keep the law. That means that all things are lawful for Christians. However, we also see that all things are not helpful and all things do not edify. We want to help our children understand that just because something is lawful it does not always mean that it is beneficial either for ourselves or for others.

We also see that we are to help our children learn to seek the well-being of others. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” This verse says that we are to use our liberty to serve others and not to satisfy ourselves. Mark 10:42-44 says, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.’” The people of the world want to be served and tell others what to do. In contrast, Christ said that true greatness happens in our lives when we serve others and help them develop their full potential for ministry. In this way, we are seeking the well-being of others and doing what will help others become what God plans for them to be.

Paul gives us an example of the way that we can exercise our liberty. 1 Corinthians 10:25-27 says, “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for ‘the earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness.’ If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.” Our liberty means that we are free to eat whatever is sold in the marketplace. Christ told Peter in Acts 10:12-15, “In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’” As Christ spoke to Peter from heaven, He said that God has cleansed all things. As a result, we can feel free to eat anything that is sold in the marketplace.

However, we are also told not to ask any questions about those things in the marketplace for the sake of our conscience. In the previous verses of this chapter, we saw that some of the things that were sold in the marketplace had previously been offered to idols. That is why we are told to ask no questions. If a person were to ask questions in such a situation, that person might be told that the meat he was about to purchase had previously been offered to idols. In such a case, the conscience of a person might bother him, especially if he was a weak Christian. We see that it is allowable to eat all things because God is the Creator of all things. In fact, Genesis 1:31 says, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” In this verse, we see that everything that God created is very good.

Paul also told the people of Corinth that they should feel free to accept an invitation to dinner of a person that was not a Christian. Christ was often criticized by the Jewish religious leaders for eating with tax collectors and sinners. Matthew 9:10-12 says, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.’” In this way, Christ pointed out that eating dinner with a person that is not a follower of Christ offered an excellent opportunity to help that person learn how to have their sin forgiven by Christ.

Paul said that when we accept an invitation to eat dinner with a person that is not a Christian we should eat whatever food is served. We should avoid asking if that food was bought from a place where it had been offered to an idol. Such questions would offend the person giving the dinner and would create a barrier to sharing the Gospel instead of providing an opportunity to share the Gospel.

However, Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 10:28-30, “But if anyone says to you, ‘This was offered to idols,’ do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for ‘the earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness.’ ‘Conscience,’ I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another *man's* conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for *the food* over which I give thanks?” If the person giving the dinner tells you before you eat that the food was offered to idols, then you should avoid eating the food that was offered to idols for the sake of the conscience of the person who told you. We can help our children to understand the difference in these two situations. Although we are free to eat whatever is served because God is the Creator of all things, if a person tells us before eating that the food was offered to idols, we should avoid eating that food for the sake of his conscience.

Here, we see a key distinction. The person who told us that the food was offered to idols is dealing with his own conscience. The question is not about our own conscience. As Christians, there is not a problem with the food. The problem is with the conscience of the other person. For the well-being of the conscience of that person, we should choose to avoid eating the food that was offered to idols. Here, we see that we do one thing when nothing is said about the source of the food. We do the opposite when the person tells us the source of the food. That is an example of what it

means to set aside our liberty for the well-being of another person.

Here, we see that we want to help our children learn to allow their lives to be an example to others in every situation. 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.” We see that the thing that should be the basis for every decision that we make is our desire to bring glory to God. We bring glory to God by doing what would be best for the well-being of the other person. If the person is a weak Christian, that will help him to grow stronger. If the person is not a Christian, our desire is to lead that person to Christ. When we consider what will be best for others, we do bring glory to God.

Paul made the choice not to let his personal liberty offend the Jews by what he did. He made the choice not to offend the Gentiles by his personal liberty. He made the choice not to offend a weaker Christian by his liberty. In fact, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:20-23, “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.” Paul was willing to make whatever personal sacrifices were necessary in order to avoid offending anyone because of his liberty. His whole desire was to bring glory to God.

Paul said that it was his desire to please all people in all things. Instead of doing those things that would only benefit himself, he chose to do those things that would benefit others to first bring them to Christ and then to help them grow to spiritual maturity. Here, we see an example for our own lives. If we choose to make it our goal to bring glory to God in all that we do, it will also be our desire to serve others by doing the things that benefit others instead of doing the things that will benefit ourselves. Just as it was the desire of Paul to profit others by the choices that he made for his life, it will be our desire to profit others by the choices that we make for our life. That is what will make it possible for us to say as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” When we imitate the example of Christ, we can feel free to invite both our physical and our spiritual children to imitate us. The result will be that we will be able to say to our physical and spiritual children the same thing that Paul said to the Thessalonians believers in 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.” May the Lord richly bless you as you give your children an example to imitate.