

## Study 9 Romans 14 The Weak & The Strong: To Eat or Not To Eat

Throughout church history Christians have not always agreed about what Christians can and cannot do. For example dancing, playing cards, drinking coffee or tea, going to the movies have all been topics of dispute among some Christians. The Bible has many clear commands about how a believer should live. But the Bible is also silent about many other things. In Romans chapter 14 God gives important principles to guide Christians on how to live together in unity.

The church in Rome was a mix of Jew and non-Jewish Christians. In the early days of the church these two groups of people had to learn how to live and worship together even though they were very different. The Jews, with their Old Testament background, understood circumcision to be an essential sign of a true believer's covenant with God. Jews did not eat certain foods and would have struggled to eat together with Gentile believers if non-kosher food was served. Some Gentiles likely understood these concerns if they knew the Old Testament while others would not. Jewish Christians struggled to understand that they no longer had to follow Old Testament food laws, circumcision, and special Jewish days of the Old Testament law.

Read Romans 14:1 – 15:3

1. Who do you think were those “whose faith is weak” (vs.1) and those who were the ones “passing judgment on disputable matters”?
2. What are some things today that Christians disagree about concerning whether a Christian can or cannot do?
3. What are the attitudes the weak and the strong had toward one another in the church in Rome according to these verses?
4. What are some principles the apostle Paul is arguing for in this chapter concerning how Christians should relate to one another concerning disputable matters?
5. Someone at some point in time in some place is bound to be offended by some of the things we do. How do we practically apply these principles today?

The Bible clearly teaches that some actions are sinful. These actions are not up for debate. But sometimes Christians assume something is sinful when in fact Scripture does not clearly say it is.

End this Study by discussing with those in your Life Group things you feel Christians need to hold tightly to and those things Christians need to agree to disagree on. Be sure to apply the principles taught in chapter 15.

Notes:

#### Question 1

Those whose faith is weak were probably Jewish Christians who struggled to give up their food laws and were perhaps unwilling to meet on any other day but the Jewish Sabbath which was Saturday. Those who were passing judgment may have been both Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church. They may have been passing judgment on one another over what they did not agree on. Fellowship among Christians cannot be based on everyone's agreement on disputable issues. Christians do not agree on all matters concerning the Christian life, nor do they need to. A strong mature Christian is someone who is willing to bear with the failing of weaker Christians (15:1). In 1 Corinthians Paul writes about seeking the good of others rather than insisting on what you want, especially if what you want will cause a younger or weaker brother or sister to stumble (1 Cor. 10:23-33).

#### Question 4

"stop passing judgment on one another" (14:1,13)

Do not become a stumbling block to a brother or sister (14:13)

Act in love (14:15)

Don't call evil what God has said is good (14:16)

Do not please yourself (15:1). Note that "bear with the failings of the weak" (15:1) does not refer to sin. Sin is clearly taught throughout Scripture as something that is wrong. What is referred to here "disputable matters" (14:1).

#### Question 5

Martin Luther once wrote, "A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all." (On the Freedom of a Christian Man, quoted in Jack Kuthatschek's Romans Lifguide Bible Study, pg. 68)