

Grace Bible Church

2018 Biblical Counseling Conference

Track Two



Session #13

A Way Through Conflict – Have Convictions but Pursue Love

- Some Christians drink alcohol in moderation... while others choose not to drink at all
- Some Christians have no problem watching an R-rated movie if they think there's some redeeming value in it... while others have decided to NEVER watch an R-rated or even a PG-13
- Some Christians enjoy all kinds of music... while others have decided they're only going to listen to Christian music
- Some Christians use credit cards... some don't
- Some Christians view debt as a sin... others think it's a wisdom issue
- Some vote Democrat... and others vote Republican or something else
- Some teach their kids about Santa Claus... and others don't
- Some participate in Halloween... and others don't
- Some are passionate about homeschooling... and others have chosen to partner with the public school or Christian school
- Some allow their teenagers to date... but others guide them towards courtship or something else
- Some have their children vaccinated... but others have great concerns about it
- Some take advantage of epidurals and hospitals... while others are committed to home births in the bedroom or bathtub
- Some use birth control... while others are committed to having as many children as God gives them
- Some Mothers breast-feed... while others use formula in a bottle
- But even the mothers that breast-feed don't all agree... 'cause some breast-feed ON DEMAND... while others put their child on a schedule
- Some Moms work outside the home... others stay home full-time
- And some Mothers are wound up about organic and eating clean... while others are still handing out Pop-Tarts and Fruit Loops... to the glory of God!

John 13:35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

I. **Make Sure Your Counselee Obeys without Question All Clear Commands in the Bible**

Romans ch. 14 is all about helping us make decisions in areas where God has not clearly commanded us one way or another about something. But this is not a chapter encouraging you to form your own convictions on every issue, as if God's Word has not spoken!

I John 5:2-3 “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

Christians who love God are not looking for some kind of loophole or excuse to disobey God's Word.

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II. Help Your Counselee to Be Honest about What Their Personal Convictions are Actually Based On

Without realizing it, many Christians have settled in with what they feel good about, or what they saw growing up in their home, or what someone else who discipled them told them, but they've never actually wrestled with Scripture for themselves on that particular issue.

Make sure their convictions are based on a biblical theology and not just their own personal 'Me-ology.'

Help your counselee to get a firm conviction that's now based on Scripture, but then remind them that God calls them to hold onto that conviction with a hand of humility and a heart of love.

God calls us to adopt a mindset of love and humility that acknowledges:

#1 – I could be wrong

#2 – God could actually lead other believers who love Jesus as much as I do to choose differently

Yes, there is one Holy Spirit, but He doesn't lead every Christian to the same conviction about every preference or conscience issue. And that's hard for us to imagine that God would so clearly show us something that He wants us to do, and not believe it's what He wants every Christian to do.

For Example:

- God may convince your counselee that he should not go to the beach because it's too great a temptation for him to see so many women dressed so immodestly today, but that does not mean that every other Christian man who goes to the beach is violating his conscience and sinning against God
- God may convince your counselee that she can't use a credit card responsibly because it's too easy for her to buy what she doesn't need with money she doesn't have, but it's wrong for her to judge other Christians who use credit cards, and to assume that they're misusing them and disobeying God's will for their lives

III. Help Your Counselee to be Fully Convinced in Their Own Mind Yet Refuse to Despise, Destroy or Condemn Those Who Choose Differently

A. Paul Says to Do the Hard Work of Cultivating Strong Convictions

Despite the danger that convictions can lead to conflict between believers, Paul doesn't say the answer is to stop having strong convictions, and to just water everything down, saying, 'Oh, we'll never agree, so it doesn't matter. We just won't think about that.'

Romans 14:5 “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”

The Greek root word for ‘fully convinced’ has the idea of a container that is filled to the brim. So the word picture Paul gives is of a person who is completely filled up or thoroughly convinced as to why they believe what they believe.

And so, Paul’s not just saying that you’re allowed to have your own opinion. He’s actually commanding each believer to think hard and to be fully convinced in their own mind.

Romans 14:23 “But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”

He wants every believer to have a firm conviction and to live it by faith. But then he wants us to hold that conviction with humility, being ready to lay it down out of love for another brother or sister.

And here’s why: The biblical goal is UNITY not UNIFORMITY.

God is most glorified when the world sees all the differences we have with each other over little issues, and then sees the humility and love we extend to each other in the midst of all those differences!

If the only reason a church family stays together and loves each other is because they’re all doing the very same things in every area of life – that’s not biblical love. That’s just a club or an affinity group. Even the world pulls that off on a regular basis.

B. Paul Says to Have Convictions But Then Don’t Sin Against Other Christians Who Choose Differently

Romans 14:3 “Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has received him.”

1. Weaker Christians should not judge those who are convinced of greater freedoms

“How can those people be Christians and do that? Don’t they know they’re hurting the testimony of Christ? And don’t they know they’re supposed to give up things like that for the sake of the Gospel?”

2. Stronger Christians should not despise weaker Christians

“Those Christians don’t even understand the freedom we have in Christ... and they’re not mature like us! They need to grow up. They’re so legalistic, just thinking about about rules and prohibitions.”

Paul says weaker Christians have no right to judge stronger ones. And stronger Christians have no right to despise weaker ones. And neither one is supposed to spend any time trying to convince the other group to cross the line over into their ‘Camp.’

- 3. Paul actually places the greater burden on stronger Christians** as he warns them about the serious danger of destroying another brother

Romans 14:15 “Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.”

Romans 14:20 “Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food...”

Romans 15:1 “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

IV. Help Your Counselee to be Driven by Love for Others and the Glory of God Rather than Proving a Point or Promoting a Cause

Your counselee may have spent the bulk of her life trying to prove a point or promote a cause, and it's left a trail of broken bodies behind her – all in the name of truth and convictions.

Ask good questions to help your counselee see the real motive of their own heart better.

- Which characterizes you most?
- Loving others and glorifying God?
- Or proving a point and promoting your specific cause?

A. After You're Convinced of What You Personally Should Do – Assume that Those Who Choose Differently Love God Just as Much as You Do

Romans 14:6 “He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for He gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.”

B. After You're Convinced of What You Think You Should Do You'll Let Love Limit and Temper Your Freedoms – so that Whenever Your Liberty Collides with Others You'll Choose Love

In other words, you realize that just because you can (you are convinced you have the freedom to do something) doesn't mean you should. And just because you can in some settings doesn't mean you should at all times, with everyone. Love becomes the regulator of what I do and where I do it.

V. Help Your Counselee to See How Paul Undergirds this Whole Argument about Little Issues with Great Big Theological Truths!

A. Paul brings it back to Jesus!

Romans 15:3 “For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.’”

B. Paul Lumps Us All Together in a Position of Submission to God as Our Judge

Paul reminds us who the real Judge is, and brings back into view the fact that every Christian – regardless of convictions – is a servant of God, so it's not our place, but God's, to judge each one of us.

Romans 14:10-13 ¹⁰But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹For it is written: *As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* ¹²So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

Conclusion –

May God use us, as counselors, to lead our counselees to call others to repentance when it's sin, but to choose humility and love when it's a preference or conscience issue, because that's when the power of the Gospel shines the most!