

How to Disagree Well – 1 Cor 8

Sermon from Nov 3, 2019 – Small Group Notes

Sometimes the right answer isn't the shortest answer. 1 Cor 8 proves that! Often we summarise this chapter with only a few sentences, but actually miss the whole argument that Paul brings to it.

We like things black and white. Often right and wrong isn't that simple.

With the following ethical dilemmas get people to talk in groups of two or three and tell them to answer the questions quickly as there isn't time to discuss...

You are at a concentration camp. Your child tries to escape. The guard wants you to kill your own child. He promises that if you don't he will kill your child and one other person. You trust that what he says is true.

- What do you do?

You are the first on the scene of an accident. You must either help a person you love, who is gravely hurt, and so might still not survive, or a person you hate that will definitely survive because of your help.

- What do you do?

You know painful information that could destroy someone's life.

- Do you do the honest thing and tell them, or do you hide it?
- What if any day they might learn it anyways and find out that you knew all along?

A man does something horrible to your family. They don't have enough evidence to convict. Later he is arrested for the same crime against someone else but this time you know he didn't do it and could be his alibi.

- Do you step forward and help, or let the person be convicted?

While driving next to pavements full of people someone steps into the road in front of your car. Hitting the person at this speed could likely be fatal but turning into the crowd could be worse.

- What do you do?

You are Jack Bauer.

- Do you torture the terrorist if it will possibly save thousands of lives?

You might disagree with the person next to you... they may have said some horrible things!

There is a formula to these dilemmas. Often there is something you personally care about pitted against your values. Often the situation forces a decision that will mean loss; usually someone dying to be dramatic. Generally the situations are even more graphic than what I have shared here so that it can be your own children, at a young age, pleading with you for help!

We like things black and white. Often right and wrong isn't that simple.

First it is important for us to understand the situation that concerned the Corinthian church. How would you describe the situation from what you know about it?

Read 1 Cor 8.

- What insights can you gain about their dilemma?
- If you were to argue for one side of the argument, or the other... what might you say? (You could get one of half of the room to take each side of the argument and get them to debate it, or play devil's advocate if the group is strongly in favour of one side or the other.)

How to disagree well...

So here are some lessons for us to catch today...

1. We need to respect others... they have reasons for their views

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-2

'we all possess knowledge'

- Have you ever radically changed a view you held from listening to a different perspective?
- Can you think of any examples of this whether trivial or significant?
- Why does this happen less than it likely should?

2. We need to be humble with what we know

'knowledge puffs up'

In Vs. 2 Paul says, "The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know"

We are all in the process of learning. Our knowledge is not perfect. God knows the right answer to any question... but we are not God and so must handle our knowledge with humility. This should, however, not be pushed so far as to say there is no answer. Paul gave them clear direction.

'love builds up'

- Why do people often forget love when they disagree with others?
- How can we get better at handling the emotions or issues that come with disagreement?

3. It is important that we live out of a faithful conscience.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:7-13

- What, in these verses, do you see about the conscience?
- How can we cultivate a healthy conscience?
- What do we do if our conscience is not what it should be?
- How does Paul's talk about conscience mean that no one is the winner in this argument?

So what about issues today?...

- What are some of the issues that Christians disagree on these days?
- How can we get better at being united as Christians, while still disagreeing on various issues?

Disagreement brings out the worst in people! We need to be able to disagree and love at the same time. We will disagree about various things. We need to be able to disagree in love. We need to be clear with each other that our love is greater than our disagreement. Paul doesn't set aside truth. He doesn't say there is no right view as some would like to. His concern, however, is that we disagree well as we are built up in Christ.