
Loving Your Neighbor In A New Normal

Victory Life Church

Sunday, May 10, 2020

Introduction

We are facing unique situations in our lifetime with COVID-19. The human race has experienced war, famine, pestilence, and plagues since the Fall of Man. We have not faced these situations in our lifetime and therefore have almost no experience on how to deal with this. Many people are trying to understand this pandemic and deal with it properly. There are many who are trying to use it as an opportunity for power. And there are many here and around the world who are afraid. When we face an unknown like we are, my desire is that we recalibrate our hearts and minds to God, His Word, and His Spirit in real time and in the midst of a real issue around the world.

How we recalibrate to God and His Word and His Spirit is what my goal is as a pastor. We have worked on recalibrating your hearts and minds toward faith instead the natural, human response many of us have of fear. I want to turn up the volume on another critical piece in following Jesus: love.

We need to see how to love our neighbor as the world is resetting. There is no “back to normal.” There will be a new normal. I want Christians, followers of Jesus, to lead the way in how we live in a new normal. To do this, we need to be calibrated to God’s word, His Spirit, His love, and His wisdom. We’re recalibrating to faith over fear, now we need to recalibrate to love as well.

The New Testament “Epistles” (letters) are written by the apostles, who oversee the church, addressing specific issues that specific church is facing with their revelation of Scripture and Christ Jesus. We can learn from the apostle how to understand the principles of Scripture and Christ, and then how to properly apply them to the issues we face.

When reading the New Testament Letters:

Learn to distinguish between the **principle** and the **issue**.

Issues have changed since the first century. But the principles of God’s Word are still very much relevant to our time. So we need to be able to understand and live in accordance to the principles the apostles are communicating in order to properly apply them to the issues we are living in today.

Loving Your Neighbor

The specific issue Paul is addressing in this part of 1 Corinthians 8 (through 10) is food practices that were dividing the Jewish Christians from the Gentile Christians.

Paul through this whole letter is teaching them how they are to be learning to think about everything in life through the lens of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 (NLT) Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that “we all have knowledge” about this issue. But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is **love that strengthens the church**. Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn’t really know very much. But the person who loves God is the one whom God recognizes. So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. But for us, There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and **for whom we live**. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and **through whom we live**. However, not all believers know this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. It’s true that we can’t win God’s approval by what we eat. We don’t lose anything if we don’t eat it, and we don’t gain anything if we do. But you must **be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble**. For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol? So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. And when you **sin against other believers** by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are **sinning against Christ**. So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for **I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble**.

The Principles:

1. Love trumps knowledge (or opinion)

Our motive should be to strengthen the church above self-importance

1 Corinthians 13:2 (ESV) And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

2. We live *for* God, the Father and *through* Jesus Christ
3. Loving our neighbor and personal freedom work together

Loving our neighbor means avoiding doing things that cause them to stumble