



FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

1 Corinthians

To Eat or Not to Eat?

Let's take a moment to recap!

It's been about a month since we last studied the book of 1 Corinthians as a small group, so let's refresh our memory about Paul's letter. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, a church he had helped establish, because they weren't living as the Church and as Christians should. Reports from Corinth revealed they were struggling with several serious issues. Last semester, we discussed some of these challenges, like divisions over leadership, sexual immorality, marriage disputes, confusion about beliefs, and ultimately how no matter where we are, we should live full heartedly for Christ. Paul wrote this letter to guide them toward becoming a community where God's Spirit truly dwells, helping them stay faithful to the gospel and remain prepared and blameless when Jesus Christ returns.

Now, as we dive into chapter 8, we'll explore ideas that might seem unfamiliar to us today. Paul advises the Corinthians on how to handle food that has been offered to idols. You might be thinking, "How is this relevant to me? I don't offer food to idols!" And that's true (hopefully!), but as we know, all of God's Word is given with a purpose. There are truths here that still apply to us as Christ followers today. So what may seem strange and irrelevant is far from it. We just have to unpack what this means for us today. Let's dive in!

Ice Breaker

Have you ever accidentally led someone in the wrong direction or to a decision that wasn't the best for them?

Day 1— Get It

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1–13.

1. What is the main issue in this passage?
2. What does Paul contrast in verses 1–3?
3. What does Paul say about idols (v. 4)?
4. What has happened to some “weaker” Corinthians (v.7)?
5. What is Paul’s warning to those eating the food (vv. 9–12)?

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Where's the Line?

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1–6.

The topic of food offered to idols might not seem like a big deal to us today, but in some parts of the world, it's still an issue. Even though it might be easy to skip over a passage like this and think, "This doesn't really matter to me," as with all Scripture, there's a lot we can learn from it.

In Corinth, eating food that had been sacrificed to idols wasn't just about food—it revealed deeper problems. The Corinthians struggled to understand what was right, felt pressure from the culture around them, and didn't realize how their actions could harm others.

What does this mean for us today?

This is a tricky question because it's about balancing your own spiritual convictions with how they affect others. The Bible clearly tells us what is sinful and what isn't, but for people who don't know this, our actions can sometimes become a stumbling block.

For example, this could be like watching certain movies, playing video games, following influencers, listening to certain music, or going to certain parties. Maybe you know it's **not** wrong, but if someone else sees you doing it and they feel unsure or uncomfortable, it could confuse them or even hurt their spiritual journey.

Our actions impact more than just ourselves.

6. Can you recall a time when someone you admired made a choice and it shifted the way you viewed them?

7. Have you ever considered how your choices, whether positive or negative, could influence someone else's faith journey?

8. How can we approach decision making in a way that demonstrates love and encourages others in their faith journey?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: There is Only One

Read 1 Corinthians 8:8–12.

In the last section, we discussed how some things might be wrong to participate in because of how they can affect others and their personal spiritual conviction. But we also need to be aware of the spiritual dangers that can come with certain actions.

The main issue in this chapter is that the Corinthians had the right belief but made the wrong conclusions. They were correct that there is only one true God and that idols are not real gods. However, they made a mistake by thinking it was okay to eat food offered to idols.

Paul explains later (1 Corinthians 10:14–22) that even though idols aren't real, there is still a spiritual reality behind them. Demons can pretend to be gods, and participating in anything related to idol worship connects people to those demons (1 Corinthians 10:19–20).

Because of this, loving and following God means staying away from anything connected to idols, demonic practices, or satanic influences, even if the idols themselves aren't real.

9. What's something you know you should avoid, but still feel tempted or drawn to?

10. How should we respond to the fact that the Corinthians had the right ideas about God but still made big mistakes in how they lived out their faith?

11. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly warned the Israelites not to worship idols, but they often made the same mistake. While we might not bow to statues or follow other gods, what similar traps could we fall into today?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Knowledge ≠ Action

Read 1 Corinthians 8:13.

Knowing the truth and living it out are two very different things. As Christians, we have the privilege of understanding that there is only one true God—a truth that serves as a guiding light in our lives. However, not everyone shares this understanding.

In 1 Corinthians 8:9, Paul addresses the responsibility that comes with our freedom in Christ. Some believers, confident in their knowledge that idols are powerless, thought they were helping weaker Christians by demonstrating this freedom. Instead, their actions unintentionally caused harm, shaking the faith of those who were still growing in their understanding.

This brings us back to the main point of today: **knowledge, by itself, is meaningless** unless it is lived out in love and consideration for others. Paul emphasizes that while food sacrificed to idols has no real significance (a point he will expand upon in chapter 10), eating it in a way that causes others to sin is wrong. **When we harm others through our actions, we sin against Christ Himself.**

Our calling as believers is clear—we are to care for one another, putting the needs of others above our own freedoms. If our actions risk causing a fellow brother or sister in Christ to stumble, will we prioritize love and demonstrate that we truly care for their spiritual well-being?

12. How does Paul address the Corinthians' understanding of knowledge in 1 Corinthians 8, and how does this compare to James 4:17?

13. How well does your life serve as a testimony of God's presence and transformation?

14. How does Hebrews 10:24 encourage us to act toward one another?

15. What are some ways to show love to God and other believers this week?