

## **How to Decide Questionable Things**

### **1 Corinthians 10:14-33**

#### **Introduction:**

1. There were several major issues that were causing a stir in the Corinthian church. Many of the believers were walking in self-centered pride and carnality.
2. Corinth was a city steeped in idolatry and paganism. The religious system of idolatry was a big money business and drove the culture of Corinth.
3. The Corinthian church was a mixture of Jews who had trusted Christ (and would have abhorred idolatry) and Gentiles, who would have been saved out of a life that would have been totally dominated by the idolatrous culture of Corinth.
4. One of the explosive issues in this church was the issue of eating meat that had been offered to idols at the local pagan temple. Some in the church were offended by the very idea, while others saw it as no big deal at all.
5. Praise God for this issue coming up because it provided Paul a wonderful context in which to explain to the body of Christ how to handle questionable issues in our lives.
6. All of us have been faced with issues and wondered, "Should I do this or is it wrong to do this?" This passage will provide the believer with three key questions to ask yourself when attempting to decide whether or not something is right or wrong to do.
7. This text will also provide the believer with the proper response, based on your answer to the question.

#### **First question: Does this action clearly violate one of God's commands? vs. 14**

1. Verse 14 makes it clear that there are some things that are wrong, always have been wrong, and always will be wrong. Idolatry is one of those. It is the second of the Ten Commandments, and Paul reiterates this command to the body of Christ.
2. As believers in this dispensation of grace, God's Word clearly teaches that we are not under the yoke and bondage of the Old Testament law. **Romans 6:14, 7:6; Acts 15; Galatians 2:19, 5:1**
3. But Paul also teaches us that this does not mean that we are lawless. **1 Corinthians 9:21**
4. Where would we find God's commandments to the church, the body of Christ? The Bible is clear. We go to our spokesman and apostle - Paul. **1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; 1 Timothy 6:14**
5. Paul taught the church that there are certain things that are simply **wrong** and they are wrong all of the time. They have absolutely no place in the believer's life. We saw one of those things in our text - idolatry. Other examples: **Romans 13:9-10; Ephesians 6:1-2**
6. What is the proper reaction when we are tempted to do something that clearly violates one of God's commands to the church? Flee!
  - This word "flee" means exactly what you think it means. It means to run away as fast as you can.

7. You don't talk about it, think about it, discuss it, ponder it, or weigh your options. You flee from sin as fast as you possibly can. Whatever situation is providing a source of temptation, get away from it and remove yourself from it.  
**Genesis 39:11-13**
  - **Illustration:** somebody is trying to entice you into an adulterous relationship. Run, flee and avoid this person like the plague. This is the only answer to sin.  
**Romans 13:14**
  - **Illustration:** if your computer (the Internet) is enticing you into sin, it is very simple. You have to cut off that source of temptation. You either have to get a filter that you can't get around, or get an accountability partner, or get rid of the Web.
8. The first question: Does this action clearly violate one of God's commands? If the answer is "yes," Paul tells you to flee from it. **1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22**

**Second question: Does this action glorify Satan's program in any way? vs. 15-22**

1. The Greeks were known for seeking wisdom (1:22), so Paul tells the Corinthians to use some discernment and to understand what he is about to teach them concerning meats offered to idols. vs. 15
2. Paul then uses a series of questions and illustrations to make a powerful point. Here it is: When you partake of meat that has knowingly been offered to idols in pagan rituals, you glorify the Satanic policy of evil that is behind the idolatry.
3. **First illustration:** When you partake of the cup and bread of the Lord's Supper table, this symbolically represents your union and relationship with Jesus Christ and with the other members of the body of Christ. vs. 16-17
  - Paul is not teaching that we actually partake of Christ when we drink that juice and eat that physical bread. Verse 17 makes it clear that it is symbolic of something that is already a present, spiritual reality - our oneness with Jesus Christ. cf. 11:24-26
  - When we all partake together of the Lord's Supper table, we show and demonstrate our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ and our union in that work. 12:13 (It's the Holy Spirit that places us into union with Christ, not eating bread or drinking juice.)
  - So, by partaking of the food of the Lord's Table, we associate ourselves with Jesus Christ.
4. **Second illustration:** In the Old Testament, the priests and the worshippers would many times be permitted to eat part of the sacrifice they offered to God on the altar. By eating those sacrifices, they demonstrated their faith in what the altar represented. Faith in the God of Israel - Jehovah. vs. 18
  - By partaking of the food of the altar, they associated themselves with Jehovah God.
5. Paul is setting them up for the application to the meat they were eating from the pagan altars where they would sacrifice to their idols. vs. 19-20
6. Paul reiterates what he said in 8:4. The idol and the meat offered are nothing. It is a hunk of wood and a hunk of meat. Intrinsicly there is no evil in them. vs.19

7. But Paul makes a point. It's what they **represent** that creates the problem. Behind all idolatry is Satan's program of rebellion and his evil desire to be worshipped rather than God. **Romans 1:23, 25**
8. Behind all idol worship is the demonic lie program of Satan. The demonic hosts of Satan inspire the creation and worship of idols and images. The idol itself is nothing, but **behind** that idol is the god of this world, his lies, and his corrupt system. vs. 20; cf. **Psalms 97:7**
9. Here is Paul's point: when a person eats the meat off of that idolatrous altar, he is associating himself with what that altar represents (just like his previous two illustrations he used - the Lord's Supper table and the Old Testament altar).
10. He asks the Corinthians, "How do you propose to associate yourselves with the pagan altars of idolatry (inspired by the demonic host) and then come to church and associate yourselves with Christ at His table?" vs. 21
11. Many of the Corinthians were knowingly doing this and provoking God to jealousy.
  - They were turning the Lord's Table into a hypocritical joke. They were thumbing their noses at God and thought they could get away with it. vs. 22
  - It is as if some of them were priding themselves in this and flaunting their liberty by publicly eating these meats offered in pagan rituals and then going down the street to the church and eating of the Lord's Table.
  - Paul says, "You cannot do this. You cannot make a mockery of the finished work of Jesus Christ (as represented in the Lord's Supper table) and get away with it."
12. How does this apply to us today when deciding questionable things?
  - It is very simple. If a particular action may not be sinful in and of itself (like eating a piece of meat), but it glorifies the Satanic program in any way or it associates you with evil in any way, you need to **separate** yourself from that action. **2 Corinthians 6:14-17**
  - Here are a few verses to ponder: **Ephesians 4:27, 5:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Romans 12:17, 16:19; Exodus 23:7**

**Third question: Could this action hinder another believer in his or her spiritual walk? vs. 23-33**

### **In Conclusion:**

1. How do we deal with questionable things in our lives? How do you decide when you are confronted by something and you ask yourself, "Is this right or wrong to do?"
2. Paul gives us three key questions and teaches us the correct response based on your answer to the question.
  - Does this action clearly violate one of God's commands? If the answer is "yes," what should our response be? **Flee from it!**
  - Does this action glorify Satan's program in any way? If the answer is "yes," what should our response be? **Separate from it.**
  - Could this action hinder another believer in his or her spiritual walk? If the answer is "yes," what should our response be? **Refrain from it.**