

Bible Study Group Notes

1 Corinthians 8

THE BIG PICTURE

We are beginning together a short series on guidance, from 1 Corinthians 8-10. We won't find a private technique for discovering hidden messages from God; instead, Paul trains us to make wise decisions under Scripture, in union with Christ, by the Spirit, for the good of others and the glory of God. Across the series we will ask four questions:

1. Will this wound another Christian? (*cf 1 Corinthians 8*)
2. Will this help or hinder the gospel? (*cf 1 Corinthians 9*)
3. Will this strengthen or weaken my soul? (*cf 1 Corinthians 10.1–22*)
4. Can I do this for the glory of God? (*cf 1 Corinthians 10.23–11.1*)

In 1 Corinthians 8, the issue is food offered to idols. That may feel distant from us, but the deeper question is very current: how should I use my freedom when my choices affect someone else? Paul's answer is not simply, "What am I allowed to do?" but, "What will this do to my brother or sister?" Christian freedom is real, but love governs how we use it.

INVESTIGATE

Love changes what we ask – read 1 Corinthians 8.1–3.

1. What problem does Paul identify with "knowledge" in 8.1?
2. What is the difference between knowledge that "puffs up" and love that "builds up"?
3. How might good theology or Christian maturity become ugly if separated from love?

The gospel changes what we worship – read 1 Corinthians 8.4–6.

4. What do the Corinthians know about idols and about God in 8.4-6?
5. What does 8.6 teach us about who we are, where we come from, and whom we live for?
6. How does confessing "one Lord, Jesus Christ" change the way we approach grey-area decisions?

The cross changes how we choose – read 1 Corinthians 8.7-13.

7. How does Paul describe the “weak” conscience in 8.7?

8. What freedom does 8.8 give us about food – or other outward matters?

9. What warning does Paul give in 8.9-12 about using our rights carelessly?

10. Why is the phrase “the brother for whom Christ died” so important in 8.11?

11. What is Paul willing to do in 8.13, and what does that reveal about Christian love?

REFLECT & APPLY

12. Think of a current grey-area decision – alcohol, entertainment, social media, spending, humour, dating, Sunday habits, political speech, or something else. What question do you normally ask first: “Am I allowed?” or “Will this build up?”

13. Is there someone whose conscience might be wounded or confused by the way you use your freedom? How could you take care without becoming fearful or legalistic?

14. Where might you be tempted either to trample on conscience carelessly, or to let an anxious conscience remain untrained by the gospel?

15. What is one practical decision this week where love may call you to limit your freedom for someone else’s good?

PRAY

- Thank God for the freedom we have in Christ.
- Ask Him to make us wise, tender, and careful in how we use that freedom.
- Pray that our choices would build up others, honour Christ, and reflect the love of the One who laid down His rights for us.

NB The Church Prayer Pointers for this month are available in church or on the WhatsApp group.