

WHAT IS FREEDOM FOR?

We often think of freedom as the ability to do whatever we want — to make our own choices and live without limits. But in 1 Corinthians, Paul offers a different view. He challenges the church to think about how their freedom affects others. The issue in Paul's time was food sacrificed to idols, but the real question was deeper: *How should Christians use their freedom in a way that reflects love, maturity, and care for others?*

Background and Context

In 1 Corinthians 8 & 10, Paul explores the concept of personal freedom by addressing an issue which was controversial for the Corinthian Christians. In the ancient Graeco-Roman world, animals were often sacrificed in temples as acts of worship to pagan gods. After the ritual, the leftover meat was not wasted – it was sold in markets or served at public banquets. Because it had been part of a religious ceremony, this meat was considered “sacrificed to idols.” For early Christians, this raised a big question: was eating that meat just a normal meal, or did it connect them to idol worship in some spiritual way?

Read 1 Corinthians 8

1. **What reason does Paul give for why Christians should feel ‘free’ to eat this meat?**
2. **What guiding principle does he think should overrule our individual ‘freedom’?**
3. **Why do you think Paul describes some people as having a ‘weak’ conscience?**
4. **How would you describe what Paul thinks true ‘superiority’ or ‘maturity’ is?**

Expressing Our Freedom

Read 1 Corinthians 10.23 – 11.1

5. How would you summarise Paul's attitude to personal freedom based on these verses?

6. What kind of motivational techniques does Paul use to encourage the reader?

In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul is helping those who call themselves Jesus followers to understand how to live together as a community shaped by the Gospel. While they had embraced the freedom that comes with following Jesus, many had misunderstood or misused that liberty, allowing their behaviour to reflect the surrounding culture rather than Christ. Paul writes to correct this, encouraging them to rediscover what it truly means to be God's people – living with love, humility, and a commitment to one another.

7. Rewrite 1 Corinthians 10.23-24 as if you were Paul writing it to teens today.

Expressing Our Freedom

8. What kinds of modern issues need us to constrain our personal freedom for the good of others?

9. Come up with 3 or 4 questions that you could ask yourself to assess how healthy any expression of your freedom is.

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