



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 14:1-12

For groups meeting June 28 evening through July 5 morning.

In Romans 12, Paul focused on humility. His writing in Romans 13 shifted the focus to love and submission. As we move into Romans 14, we read that Paul used these foundational principles to call believers to unity. Paul wasted no time as he instructed believers not to argue over their own opinions. Specifically, Paul referenced those who are “weak in the faith,” because he was concerned that those who are less mature in their walk with Christ could be easily upset over such arguments and this would hurt them and the church as a whole (v. 1). Paul offered two examples: what one chooses to eat (v. 2) and how one views certain days (v. 5).

At that time, some believers chose to eat only vegetables while others chose to eat a variety of foods. While Paul did not give the reason that some chose to be vegetarians, it is possible that this is related to the avoidance of meat offered to idols, which Paul addressed in detail in 1 Corinthians 8 and 1 Corinthians 10:23-20. While God did not forbid believers to eat such meat, some believed this should be avoided so there would be no association with idol worship. Paul classified these people as “weak in the faith” because they had not yet reached a place of fully embracing their liberty in Christ and still saw this type of optional behavior as a matter of obedience. Paul’s answer was to instruct those more mature in their faith not to look down on those less mature, and those less mature not to condemn those who are more mature (v. 3). Each person is subject to his or her conscience on this matter, and each is accountable to God. It is God, Paul writes, who will justify each believer (v. 4).

Paul then addressed the matter of viewing some days as more special than others. The same principle applies; each believer follows his or her own convictions regarding this optional observance (v. 5). Regardless of what one eats or what days one observes, the important thing is that each believer does so to honor and give thanks to God (v. 6). The mindset of the Christian must be in line with the reality that we do not live for ourselves, but instead we live for the glory of God. So whether we live or die, we do all for His glory (vs. 7-8). This mindset moves us away from pride and closer to a heart of surrender and service to our Savior who gave Himself so we could live both now and for eternity (v. 9). This attitude of the heart also lends itself to seeking the welfare of other believers and living so that we do not cause others to falter, which is a topic Paul addressed later in this chapter.

Judging one another is useless. Paul wrote that this practice has no place among believers, and referenced Isaiah 45:23 to remind his readers that every Christian will one day bow to God and confess Him as Lord (vs. 10-11). While accountability within the body of Christ is important for spiritual growth, each of us will give an account of our works to God on that day (v. 12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

Discussion Questions

1. How should we view those who seem to be less mature in their faith than we are? What about those who seem to be more mature than us?
2. Paul wrote about two issues that caused division among believers: eating certain foods and observing certain days. What are some issues that divide us today ... things that are optional but seem to cause arguments?
3. There are two main truths Paul references to help believers maintain unity in spite of their differences: 1) each of us will stand before God (vs. 4, 10-12), 2) whatever we do is to honor and praise God (v. 6). How do these help us to refrain from judging and condemning one another for optional behavior?
4. What can you personally do to keep your focus on living out your faith and maintaining unity with other believers?