

The Weak and Strong

Key Scriptures

Romans 14:1-15 Now receive the one who is weak in the faith, and do not have disputes over differing opinions.

² One person believes in eating everything, but the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ The one who eats everything must not despise the one who does not, and the one who abstains must not judge the one who eats everything, for God has accepted him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on another's servant? Before his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵ One person regards one day holier than other days, and another regards them all alike. Each must be fully convinced in his own mind.

⁶ The one who observes the day does it for the Lord. The one who eats, eats for the Lord because he gives thanks to God, and the one who abstains from eating abstains for the Lord, and he gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives for himself and none dies for himself. ⁸ If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For this reason Christ died and returned to life, so that he may be the Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ But you who eat vegetables only— why do you judge your brother or sister? And you who eat everything— why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God." ¹² Therefore, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

¹³ Therefore we must not pass judgment on one another, but rather determine never to place an obstacle or a trap before a brother or sister.

¹⁴ I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean in itself; still, it is unclean to the one who considers it unclean.

¹⁵ For if your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy by your food someone for whom Christ died.

Key Point: When it comes to non-moral disputable issues, the best principle is to live and let live.

TALK IT OVER

Start talking: Pick a conversation starter for your group.

- What were some of the religious rules you were brought up with that you felt you needed to keep? What do you think about them now?

Start thinking: Questions to get your group thinking.

- Read through Romans 14:1-15 with your group. As you read, underline the sections that refer to the weak, and circle the sections that refer to the strong. As a group, come to a consensus on defining in your own terms what a weak and a strong brother is according to this passage.
- How did Jesus challenge the traditional Jewish practices related to food and the sabbath? (cf. Mark 7:13-23, Matt 12:1-14)
- What did Paul say about clean/unclean food, and Sabbath keeping in 1 Tim 4:1-6, 1 Cor 8:8, and Col 2:16-17?
- Why does it fall upon the Stronger brother to yield to the weaker brother's conscience? (v. 13-15)

Start sharing: Questions to create openness.

- In what ways can differing convictions and opinions lead to disputes within the church? Can differing convictions and opinions also strengthen the church?
- How does the principle of not causing a weaker brother to stumble (v. 13) apply to our choices today? Can you think of any examples from your own experience?
- In v. 14 it says if a believer perceives something is unclean, it is unclean to them, even if that isn't really the case. How is this so? Does perception matter more than the truth?
- What do you think it means to treat others as "someone for whom Christ died?" How does this shape our interactions with fellow believers, especially in matters of conscience and conviction?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week!

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Prayer Requests. It may be helpful to pray the scriptures back to God.

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