

Romans 14:1–12 “**Life, Liberties, & Love**”

Summary

In Romans 14, Paul addresses the tension between Jewish and Gentile believers over traditions, food, and days of worship. His message is clear: not everything is an essential matter of salvation. In **essentials**, there must be unity. In **non-essentials**, liberty. But in **all things**, love.

Paul reminds the church:

1. **In Essentials – Unity:** Doctrines like the divinity of Christ, the resurrection, and salvation through Jesus are non-negotiable.
2. **In Non-Essentials – Liberty:** Personal convictions about food, drink, or days of worship are matters of conscience. Each must live fully convinced before the Lord.
3. **In All Things – Love:** Convictions should not lead to condemnation. Liberty should never be flaunted. Love must take precedence over freedom.

The guiding principle: **Live to honor God and love others more than you love your liberties.**

Key Scriptures

- Romans 14:1–12
- John 14:6
- Colossians 3:16
- Romans 14:13, 15, 20
- 1 Corinthians 8:13

Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of “essentials” in the Christian faith that require unity, and why are they non-negotiable?

Essentials include doctrines like Jesus as the only way to the Father (John 14:6), the resurrection, and the Trinity. They are non-negotiable because Scripture directly reveals them and they define salvation itself.

2. How do we balance liberty in non-essentials while understanding the danger of using liberty as a license?

Liberty must always be exercised with caution and love. If Scripture clearly identifies something as sin (like adultery or drunkenness), liberty does not apply. In matters of conscience (food, days, etc.), liberty is appropriate but never at the expense of holiness or another believer's conscience.

3. Why is it important to let personal convictions remain personal, rather than imposing them on others?

Convictions are how God speaks to us individually. Imposing them on others can create unnecessary division, hinder growth, or cause someone to violate their conscience.

Follow up question: Although we should not let our personal convictions be the standard that we hold and judge others to, is it ever appropriate to correct another believer if their fruits are not representing Christ well? If so how should we accomplish this?

Yes. Scripture calls us not to judge by personal opinions, but it also commands us to lovingly hold each other accountable when sin is evident. Galatians 6:1 says, *"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness."* The difference is between imposing our personal standards versus pointing out behavior that clearly contradicts God's Word. Correction should always be done with humility, love, and the goal of restoration not condemnation.

4. What does Paul mean when he says we should "decide never to put a stumbling block" in another's way?

He means we should avoid flaunting our freedoms in ways that could lead others into sin or confusion. For example, if eating meat or drinking alcohol causes a weaker believer to stumble, love requires us to refrain in their presence.

5. How can we choose love over liberty in our daily lives?

By valuing people more than our preferences. This might mean adjusting habits for the sake of another, choosing to lay down a freedom if it could cause harm, and prioritizing unity over proving we are "right."

Paul says in Romans 14:8, "If we live, we live to the Lord." How does this truth give perspective to disagreements within the church?

It reminds us that ultimately, our lives are lived for God's glory, not for winning arguments or defending opinions. Unity is found when we all aim to honor the Lord in our decisions.

Family Spotlight

Illustration: *The See-Saw of Convictions*

Bring in a see-saw (or show a picture). Explain that differences in the church can feel like a see-saw: up and down, back and forth. But if each person moves toward the center in love, the see-saw balances. That's what Paul meant—our differences can balance, not break, the church.

Activity Idea: Have each family member write down one thing they like (food, game, hobby). Then discuss: What if someone else in the family didn't like it? How can you still show love and enjoy being together? Close by praying that your family would always choose love over personal preference.

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