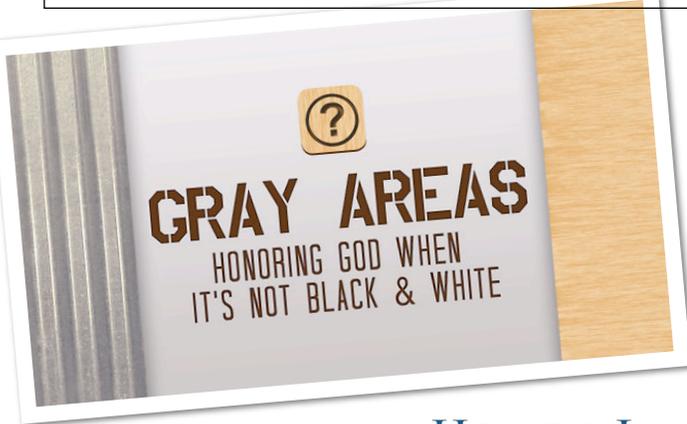


# What about the GRAY Areas?

WHEN THE BIBLE DOESN'T EXPLICITLY TELL US



✧ *Adiaphora* ✧  
“indifferent (or middle)  
things”

## HOW DO I KNOW WHAT TO DO?

How do I know the difference between things that are “Christian freedoms,” and things that could be sinful? For example, some people believe it is wrong not to wear your best clothes to church of Sun. morning. Others believe it is wrong to wear hats in Church. Should a pastor wear shorts when he is preaching?

What about consumption of alcohol? Is it wrong for men to wear earrings? What about women who get bellybutton rings?

Is it a sin to send your kids to public school, or allow them to enjoy secular entertainment? Is it sinful for Christian kids to wear costumes and go “trick or treating” on Halloween?

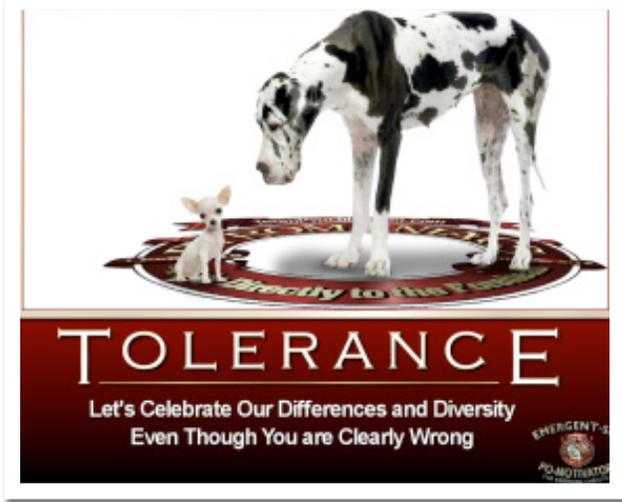
These issues, and many, many more, are not specifically condoned or forbidden in Scripture. Since we are not commanded neither to do them, nor to abstain from them...how do we decide what to do?

When does “Christian Freedom” cross the line and become acting in a sinful manner?



# Romans 14:1-23

At first glance, it may seem like this chapter doesn't really have anything to do with the activities of modern Christians, but there are some very important principles we must understand. Paul is dealing with whether or not Christians should be eating meat.



## CONTEXT

In the first century, pagan religious rituals were part of the economy. This meant that almost all of the meat that was sold in the market place had been taken from animals used in pagan rituals.

People would sacrifice animals to pagan gods and then the meat was sold in the market. For this reason many Christians thought it sinful to eat meat purchased in the market because it had been used in a pagan ritual that day.

## GOD'S SERVANTS MUST ACCEPT THEIR FELLOW SERVANTS

Read Romans 14:1-4

The first thing Paul teaches is that God's people must accept their fellow servants and allow for a diversity of opinions on the matter of eating meat.

Because the "strong" believer understands that idols are nothing more than images made by men, Paul shows us that believers must allow Christians freedom since God neither commands nor forbids the eating of sacrificed meat.

Those who think eating this meat will affect their standing with God are called "weak" believers. This doesn't mean they are inferior, it simply means they are Christians who are unable to let go of the laws

regarding the Jews. They still felt compelled to keep them.

Paul tells us to "receive" them and not to fight over uncertain things ("doubtful disputations.") Being "right" is not always acting in love. Many times we want to win the argument rather than love the person.

Christians are to make room for people to grow in Christ when dealing with gray areas. Paul tells us that God's grace is sufficient for them (v. 3-4).

Therefore, the one who says, "Yes it is O.K.," and the one who says, "No, it is not O.K.," are accepted by God.

Remember we are talking about gray areas not things that are forbidden in Scripture.

## GOD'S SERVANTS MUST LIVE BY THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE

Now Read Romans 14:5-16

Here Paul is showing us that God's people will answer to God as they live by the dictates of their conscience in questionable matters. In fact, Paul says that people honor God by obeying their conscience.



In verses 5-6, we are told that each person should be convinced in his own mind. Regarding holy days and eating meat, each believer should follow the dictates of his own conscience.

Both the one who abstains and the one who partakes, do so in honor of God.

Believers should NEVER violate their conscience. If your conscience tells you it is wrong then it is wrong, regardless of what anyone else tells you. If there is any doubt - then there is no doubt!

Yet we should always remember that Christians have freedom in matters of conscience, therefore, in those things that God does not specifically forbid, we should

extend charity, regardless if our conscience says it is right or wrong.

v. 10-12 show us that believers should not look down on those who hold differing positions in matters of conscience. Each person will give an account to God for how he listened to his conscience and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

v. 13-17 tell us that we cannot override another person's conscience. We must allow God to work in their hearts and minds. Even if it means you must curtail your freedom (v. 14).

This becomes an important facet of the discussion. If your freedom causes another person to violate their conscience, then it is a



sin for you to cause them to stumble by disobeying their conscience.

We MUST NEVER destroy the work of another's conscience (v. 14).

## GOD'S SERVANTS INCLUDE STRONG AND WEAK BELIEVERS

Finally, Paul tells us that we should not divide the Kingdom of God because of matters of conscience. This DOES NOT mean that we should accept and have fellowship with everyone who lives in open sinful rebellion to God. However, it does mean that there is room in God's Kingdom for diversity in how people understand issues of conscience.

The Kingdom of God deals with our relationship to God and not simply following legalistic rules (v. 17).



However, Paul give us an admonition that all of us should understand. There is a line that believers can cross in matters of conscience. There is a dividing line where freedom of conscience becomes sin before God.

If you act according to your conscience and you action causes another to stumble, you have sinned against your brother in Christ. (v. 20-21)

For example, if your conscience is clear regarding your freedom to do \_\_\_\_\_. But, your friend's conscience tells him that \_\_\_\_\_ is wrong. You should not do \_\_\_\_\_ in front of your brother. Nor should you attempt to convince your brother that he is free to do \_\_\_\_\_.

If your actions, although not sinful in and of themselves, cause your brother to violate his conscience, you have sinned.

You have caused your brother to stumble.

“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith:**for whatsoever is not of faith is sin**” - Romans 14:23



## *How should I decide?*

THERE ARE SOME PRINCIPLES BY WHICH WE SHOULD EVALUATE WHETHER OR NOT TO ENGAGE IN AN ACTIVITY.

1. Can I thank God for it?
2. Will this glorify God?
3. Can I grow closer to God in this?
4. Will I grow spiritually from this?
5. Will this action be a temptation for someone else?
6. Will this negatively effect my testimony with anyone?
7. Is my conscience clear about this?
8. Do I have any doubt about the action?
9. Can I proclaim the gospel with my life while doing this?

## ***Biblical Principles for Matters of Conscience***

PRINCIPLE #1: If something is neither commanded nor forbidden by God, and the matter is only between our own conscience and God, then we should

\_\_\_\_\_ (see Romans 14:2,3,5).

PRINCIPLE #2: When we deal with matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God, the question we should ask ourselves is,

“ \_\_\_\_\_?” (see Romans 14:13,19).

PRINCIPLE #3: If something is neither commanded nor forbidden by God, but an action we take could potentially be confusing, misunderstood, or offensive, then we should

\_\_\_\_\_ (see Romans 14:13,15,21).

PRINCIPLE #4: If something is neither commanded nor forbidden by God, but someone insists that we are wrong for making a particular choice, then we must

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_