

PRINCIPLES FOR THE 'GRAY' AREAS

I Corinthians 6:12; 10:23

What are the gray areas in life? **Merriam-Webster dictionary online** has a pretty good definition: *“an area or situation in which it is difficult to judge what is right and what is wrong.”*



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Some people say there are no gray areas to them. Everything is either black or white. Some others say there are a lot of gray areas in life. (Two far ends of the spectrum.)



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For some people there are those situations (ethically, morally, spiritually) where they are not sure if it is right or wrong to do something.



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In these verses today Paul gives a few principles to help for the gray situations that pop up from time to time.

A couple things today hurt Christians maturity:

- 1. Being legalistic.** Rules and convictions that are not in the Bible. Personal preferences that are forced on others that are not in the Bible and that are make the one forcing it feel more accepted by God.
- 2. Having license to sin.** Christians who take their Christian liberty pass what the Bible teaches and indulge in some sins.

This second one is what Paul was dealing with here in this scripture. The **Corinthians** had **two sayings** found in this passage:

- 1. “All things are lawful for me...” (12)** This was the view that Christian liberty allowed them to indulge in sinful activities.
- 2. “Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them.” (13)** This involved them trying to justify their sexual activities outside of marriage.

Here is just a little bit of how Dr. David Jeremiah sums up life in Corinth.

“Corinth was rich and immoral, a city that lived without self-control. Sadly, the Corinthian Christians often fit the stereotype of their pagan peers. Somehow, perhaps because of their culture, or possibly because of some warped teaching they had received, the Corinthian believers felt that in Christ they had full license to do whatever they pleased.” (Jeremiah Study Bible, p. 1571)

Some of you, like me, may have thought this sounds like America and some Christians in America.

Paul gives us **three** great **principles** here in response to the sayings that are things are lawful for them:

1. Paul stated that “all things are not helpful.” (12b)

Here is a question that Paul filtered things through in his life. Some translations use the word beneficial or profitable instead of helpful. Is this activity beneficial spiritually? Will it hinder my walk with my Lord?

2. “I will not be brought under the power of any.”

Will it dominate me, my time, or my energies? Will it consume my thought life, my free time, etc.? Have you been mastered by something in your life? It is easy to have this happen if we do not exercise self-control. There is a lot of articles and studies you can read on the effects of the internet, especially social media on teens and children. The articles are **shouting a warning to parents** and they still do not know the full effects on the brain yet.

Please read these article parents and be a parent when it comes to controlling something that children and most teens are not equipped to control.

FOMO is the reason a lot of teens and adults are out of control when it comes to their phones, tablets, etc. FOMO means the Fear Of Missing Out.

We are very self-centered and short-sighted in the American culture. We subconsciously ask ourselves:

- **Will it feel good?**

- **Can I get away with it?**

Sometimes we ask these questions in a flash and then we act on it. I think this is what happens on social media sometimes. I think you would agree it seems improbable that some people thought 2 seconds before they posted some things for the world to see.

Illustration: My dad and I changed a water pump on my car in the late 70’s. I should have put antifreeze in it right away but I didn’t. The next morning on the way to my job in cold weather, my car stopped on I-85 because I had not protected it with antifreeze. The question I remember coming up was, “What was Keith thinking?” I can answer that. I wasn’t. No reason or excuse. I just wasn’t thinking. You know why people do some of the things they do and we ask, what were they thinking? The answer is, they were not.

In I Corinthians 1:23, Paul adds another principle:

3. “Not all things edify” (23b)

Edify means to build up.

Question: What are you doing right now that is building up your spiritual life?

What are you doing right now that is tearing down your spiritual life?

We need to understand that not all things build us up.

In this discussion, Paul is actually speaking of how we help others or tear other Christians down by our actions. We don’t mean to.

The issue then: Eating meat that had been offered to pagan idols but then sold in the public market...

Paul had no problem with it saying the pagan idols are not real anyway so meat is meat. But some weaker, perhaps younger Christians couldn't bring themselves to eat meat they knew was offered to idols. Paul cautions the mature Christians to keep this in mind and not weaken a younger Christian's faith by buying or eating this meat in front of them.

You and I might say, well I'm glad we don't have meat offered to idols anymore. But **the principle is the same today**. The balance is: if you have freedom biblically with the Lord to do something that will weaken or offend a fellow believer, refrain from it in their presence. AT the same time we cannot let others convictions rule our lives. There is a balance to keep here.

BRINGING IT HOME:

Warren Wiersbe identified a couple more principles in I Corinthians:

* **Will it only please me or will it glorify Christ? (10:31)**

* **Will it help to win the lost to Christ or turn them away? (10:33)**

I'll end by reading I Corinthians 10:31

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (I Corinthians 10:31)