

Bible Studies for Life: July 3

Interdependent Independence • 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

By Clay Anthony



Anthony

“I
ca
n
do
wh
at
ev
er
I
wa
nt
,”
sa
ys
yo
ur
fa
vo
ri
te
se
ve
n-
ye
ar
-
ol
d.
“Y

ou
do
yo
u
an
d
I
wi
ll
do
me
,”
sa
ys
yo
ur
fa
vo
ri
te
mi
ll
en
ni
al
. Th
e
me
ss
ag
e
is
th
e
sa
me

fr
om
bo
th
:
“I
wi
ll
do
wh
at
ev
er
ma
ke
s
me
ha
pp
y
if
it
ma
ke
s
me
ha
pp
y.
”

Sounds like something Jesus would say, right? Not quite. The church at Corinth had developed such an attitude. The Apostle Paul planted this church and spent eighteen months teaching them, yet this congregation was fitting squarely into the world around it. Clearly the world was having more influence over the church than vice versa.

Consider what such an attitude reveals to an unbeliever. Verse 24 tells us to look out for the good of our neighbors. Jesus was once asked about our neighbors and His answer was the person who is most unlike you.

As a believer we are to put the concerns of nonbelievers ahead of our own. If a nonbeliever sees us living in a manner that is unbecoming of Christians, then what are they to think of Christ? More so, if we are participating in a perfectly lawful exercise of our rights that run contrary to what God has forbidden, the saying is worth repeating: Just because it is legal does not make it right. Our witness and our King's reputation are on display.

Consider what such an attitude does to a believer. Verse 28 brings into play the act of winking and nodding at eating meat sacrificed to idols. Paul teaches that such an action is not harmful, seeing that idols are not real, except for the fact that someone might call you out as sinning for eating the meat.

Who would call out a brother doing something that really was not a sin in the first place? A pharisee? An atheist? A fellow mature believer? Perhaps this is a new believer who does not understand the wink and nod system and further is confused as to the eating of meat from the table of idol worshippers.

Their conscience is bothering them over what they are witnessing you doing. At that point, what should your attitude be? "You do you and I will do me?" No, put the meat down and put others first.

Consider what such an attitude would do for all the people you encounter. Verse 32 is a warning that whether your actions are performed before believers or not, the actions carry consequences. Your actions are a reflection of your faith and should never offend.

Verse 33 further drives home the point that Paul, in declining

to eat the meat, was attempting to please all people without thinking his own welfare. That indeed sounds very much like something Jesus would say.

Consider instead what our attitude should reflect. Verse 31 states that instead of being a stumbling block for others, our attitude toward sin should be one that points toward God. To give God glory simply means to give God credit. So, when dealing with food and drink or relationships or money or work or church service or any number of items, it is best for the believer to sidestep any notion of winking and nodding at sin.

God is to receive all credit for the life He gives us, and we are to do all in our power to point all people toward His power. May we never be guilty of being a roadblock to someone coming to Jesus or seeking to grow to be more like Jesus.

Consider as well all that we see in the secular culture around us that is more of a wink and a nod toward sin. Yes, much today is legal but not of God. Nothing sinful is worthy of our participation, outside of praying for those participating.

That brings us to an obvious question: Are the actions in which we are involved, although accepted by all, nonetheless considered an offense to God? What is each of us going to do with the answer that question?

Anthony is director of the Collaborative Missionary Network, Oxford/Holly Springs.