

Romans 14

Study 11

Eat, Drink and Be Christian

INTRODUCTION

By now, we're getting familiar with the fact that Paul's writing to a church with real unity problems. On the one hand, there are the Jewish Christians, who are being forced to re-learn a lifetime of habits. There were the food laws - like not eating pork - the rules about who you could mix with, the life-long laws that were drilled into them as kids. And on the other hand, there were the easy-going gentiles; bacon and eggs for breakfast, no hang-ups with rules and regulations, and they didn't even wash their hands when they got back from the markets. From our perspective, it might seem like a bit of a joke, but the fact is, the church was in danger of falling apart over issues like what you could eat and drink, and what you could do on a Sunday. Everyone had their own very strong ideas on the matter, and everyone was determined to have their way.

Thankfully, we live in more enlightened times... or do we? You might find Paul's advice to the Romans is just as applicable today!

THINK ABOUT IT...

These days, there are still Christians who set themselves rules about what they eat or drink. Often, their standards seem impressive.

How would you describe the faith of someone who - because of their beliefs - doesn't eat meat?

WEAK/ STRONG

What reaction would you have to a person who, because of their beliefs, didn't drink alcohol?

WHAT A WOWSER

THAT'S A BIT STRICT

RESPECT THEIR OPINION

IMPRESSED

FEEL A BIT GUILTY THAT I'M NOT AS STRONG

FROM THE BIBLE...Read Romans 14, then think through these questions...

1. Verse 1 gives us two important instructions that we must keep in mind as we read and apply the rest of the chapter. What are they?

2. Who is it that we're told to accept?

3. Place a tick beside the person who Paul says is spiritually weaker...

THE PERSON WHO EATS EVERYTHING

THE PERSON WHO EATS ONLY VEGETABLES

4. What is the temptation of the man who eats everything? (v3)

What is the temptation of the one who does not? (v3)

Why are both of them wrong?

APPLYING IT...

Do you find it hard to get the right balance here? How do these issues affect your own Christian life? How will they affect our church activities?

5. "One man considers one day more sacred than another, another man considers every day alike." (v5) According to the principles Paul has already set out, which is the WEAKER in faith?

6. How does this apply to people who say "You shouldn't play tennis on a Sunday", or, like the Seventh Day Adventists, "The Sabbath MUST be observed on a Saturday."?

How do we usually respond to people like this?

From verses 6 and 7, how *should we* respond to people who hold these views?

7. What point is Paul making in verses 8 to 12? How will this fact be demonstrated in the way we handle the sort of issues Paul is describing here?

8. Write out verse 13 in your own words to reinforce it in your mind. It's a key verse!

9. Rather than judging one another, what must our attitude be?

10. Is any food or drink "spiritually unclean"?

Can any food or drink cause "spiritual harm"? How?

11. Read verses 14 to 23 again. What directions does Paul give for what we eat and drink?

What compromises does he call us to make, and why?

What GOALS are we working towards? (Look especially at v 18 and 19)

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What should YOUR eating and drinking habits be? Whose needs do you consider in making such a decision?

Can you reduce the things Paul has been saying to a general principle?

Can you think of any other areas of life where this principle will apply?