

OUTLINE for Romans 14:13-23 ...

- 1) In matters of conscience we must choose to live by the biblical values of the kingdom of God, 14:13-18.
 - Choose helping over hindering, 14:13.
 - Understand that perception matters, 14:14, 1 Corinthians 8:4-7.
 - Choose love over liberty, 14:15, 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 (esp. NIV).
 - Do not blemish your good conviction by insisting on your “rights” and disregarding the spirit of the kingdom, 14:16.
 - Remember and accept the priorities and values of the kingdom of God, 14:17.
 - Enjoy full assurance and acceptance by God and the affirmation of men, 14:18, cf. 1 Corinthian 4:1-7.
- 2) In matters of conscience we must embrace the things valuable to God and his kingdom, 14:19-21.
 - Making true peace with fellow believers and building them up in the Lord is valuable to God, 14:19.
 - Insisting on our liberty over our brother’s conscience destroys what is valuable to God, 14:20.
 - Insisting on our own way via our Christian liberty IS NOT GOOD, 14:21.
- 3) In matters of conscience we keep some things between ourselves and God, 14:22-23.
 - We are blessed if we live within our “faith values,” 14:22.
 - We sin if we live apart from our “faith values,” 14:23.

Weaker brother or contentious brother?

- The **WEAKER** brother or sister ...
 - Scenario: A weaker brother (or sister) follows the lead of another in a matter of conscience but with a weak faith and thus violates his conscience.
 - **EXAMPLE**: Jane, who is strong in faith, loves contemporary Christian music and listens to it often. Her friend, John, who is weak in faith, looks up to Jane and listens to contemporary music because Jane likes it, even though he thinks it is wrong. When John listens, his conscience is violated because he doubts and his listening does not proceed from faith (see Romans 14:23). If Jane is aware of this, she should not listen to contemporary music in John’s company and should encourage him to not listen also.
- The **CONTENTIOUS** brother or sister ...
 - The contentious brother (or sister) is not the same as the weaker brother, but he will sometimes operate under the guise of the weaker brother to manipulate people to his advantage.
 - This person seeks his own good while portraying himself as concerned with the things of God and the needs of others. Underlying motives of the contentious brother include control and fear. We do not “write off” the contentious brother, but we also do not let him control the group.
 - **EXAMPLE**: Richard, who is strong in faith, loves contemporary Christian music and listens to it regularly. His friend, Rhonda, hates this music and is very critical of Richard for listening. Rhonda insists that Richard quit listening to this music because it offends her, even though Richard does not listen in her presence. Rhonda is not a weaker sister, but a contentious sister, as she demands her way and tries to manipulate her friend.

“KINGDOM OF GOD” VALUES FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13 ...

- Knowledge (even correct knowledge) exercised apart from love only builds our pride and **IS NOT** a kingdom of God value, 8:1a.
- Love builds up and thus **IS** a value and priority of the kingdom of God, 8:1b-3.
- A person’s **perception** of the reality of “gods” (false or otherwise) **matters**, 8:4-6.
- We need to be sensitive to the fact that reception and full acceptance of God’s truth is a **process**, 8:7.
- Exercising our rights at the expense of another believer’s weak conscience is **an act of destruction thus opposed to the values of the kingdom of God**, 8:8-11.
- Wounding the conscience of our weaker brother or sister by exercising our freedom in Christ **is sin against Christ and the offended person**, 8:12-13.

GROCERY LIST OF IMPORTANT RELATED CONCEPTS ...

- **Priorities.** As with many things biblical, it comes down to priorities. Do we value what God values? Do we allow God to structure our priorities? Are we willing, for instance, to choose love over liberty?
- **Doctrine.** Teaching on matters of conscience is doctrine. Even though the particular issues of conviction are not doctrinal or moral issues, how we deal with these various issues and how we interact and respond to one another is a doctrinal concern.
- **Permission.** Another very important general principle. Do we give people permission to disagree with us on matters of conscience with NO reservations.

