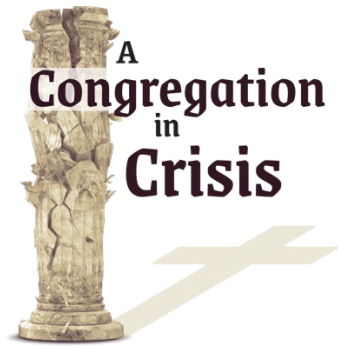

Lesson 4
A Crisis Over Food and Freedom
(1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1)

By the end of this session, all participants should be able to . . .
Treasure the opportunity to use our freedom to benefit others in every situation.

The truths critical to developing this primary learning goal are:

- Love affects the choices we make with the food we eat or don't eat (8:1-13).
- Freedom and slavery go hand in hand when proclaiming the good news about Jesus as our number one priority (9:1-27).
- Food really isn't the problem. Who or what we worship is the problem—we see this in examples from Bible history and the Lord's Table versus the demons' table (10:1-22).
- Everything is permitted—but not everything is beneficial. Love for God and giving glory to him will help determine what choice is best for us and the people around us (10:23–11:1).

Introduction

Read these famous quotes about freedom. Circle or underline words or phrases that might be common threads in each of these quotes.

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." (Nelson Mandela)

"I think of a hero as someone who understands the degree of responsibility that comes with his freedom." (Bob Dylan)

"Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility. For the person who is unwilling to grow up, the person who does not want to carry his own weight, this is a frightening prospect." (Eleanor Roosevelt)

"May we think of freedom, not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to do what is right." (Rev. Peter Marshall)

What would you say is the common thread running through these quotes?

Knowledge vs. Love

1. Read through chapter 8. In one sentence, how would you summarize Paul's main point in this chapter? Compare answers as a group.

2. Your friend is a recovering alcoholic, but no one else in your group (other than you) knows. What might you do to support your friend when the rest of the group invites the two of you to go out to the bar for a couple of drinks?

Freedom

3. Read through chapter 9. List some of the freedoms Paul claimed to have as one of the apostles.

4. What might be some risks associated with the style of ministry Paul described in 9:19-23? What rewards might come with it?

Dangerous Food?

5. In 10:1-22, Paul uses two examples—one from Israel's history and one from the congregation's activities—to warn the Corinthians. What could he be warning them about?

6. "'Everything is permitted'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permitted'—but not everything builds up" (10:23 EHV). Discuss the examples below and explain how Paul's advice will guide your choice in each situation.

   - Preparing the menu when you invite your friend, who is a convert from Judaism, over for dinner.

   - Having alcohol at a church function.

- Only worshiping online when the opportunity is available to worship in person.

- Exclusively using a praise band (electric guitars, keyboard, drums, etc.) for worship.

- Using AI to write a student's term paper or a pastor's sermon.

Conclusion

How does Paul's advice relate to the quotes about freedom in the introduction? What are some things you are free to do that bring you joy each day? List them, and then take a moment to thank God for the freedom to enjoy all of his good gifts!