

## **“FIRST THINGS FIRST”**

**(1 Corinthians 8:1-13)**

*January 1, 2017*

### **I. First things FIRST:**

*We all possess knowledge.*

**But there is much that Christians don't agree on, and we STRUGGLE sometimes to find common ground.**

**An important TRUTH: knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Knowledge has a tendency to make us PROUD.**

**The Christian always needs to let love, not knowledge, be the LAST word.**

### **II. Addressing the ISSUE:**

**Paul begins by stating there is nothing wrong with eating food that had been offered to idols. Why not? Because, an idol is NOTHING.**

**The one God who IS real and whom we serve, has approved ALL foods:**

*“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” Acts 10:15*

**But, Paul said it is sometimes:**

### **III. A matter of CONSCIENCE:**

**Paul agreed with the “any food is ok” crowd, but did NOT agree with their spirit and attitude toward those he called “weak.”**

**Many of them couldn't get out of their minds what they had always believed. To eat it was UNTHINKABLE to them.**

**What is safe for one Christian may not be so for one of a DIFFERENT background, temperament or level of maturity.**

**Though Paul was the champion for Christian freedom, he counseled the more mature, more knowledgeable Christians to never allow the exercise of their freedom to UNDERMINE the faith of another believer.**

#### **IV. The ANSWER:**

**Paul's plain advice is that those who know there is nothing wrong with a certain behavior are STILL to refrain from it in order to not create problems for the weaker brother.**

**He even called it a SIN against Christ!**

**Paul did want the “weaker brothers” to learn and grow as well. Those who have a conscience against something need to be ABSOLUTELY sure it is based on the truth of God and not just some unfounded fear or feeling.**

**Christians agree that there are certain activities and actions that are ALWAYS right. It is always right to tell the truth, to love your neighbor, to minister to others, to worship God.**

**At the same time, there are certain activities that we agree are NEVER right for a Christian: taking what belongs to another, lying to someone, taking another's life.**

**But, there are many gray areas, questions whether is no CLEAR biblical injunction, such as social drinking, use of birth control, or serving in the military.**

**Christians disagree on those and other issues, but are under a MANDATE to do so respectfully and love.**

**First things first. God is love and we are to love OTHERS:**

*This is the message you heard from the beginning: we should love one another. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 1John 3:11, 16*