

What is Freedom?

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. For anyone who doesn't know me, my name is Eric. I'm the youth director here at Watermark Church, and I'm excited to get to share with you guys this morning. We've been going through the past few months the book of 1 Corinthians, and it's been some pretty heavy sermons the past few weeks. Three weeks ago, we got to talk about accountability with the story of a man who was sleeping with his stepmother. Two weeks ago, we got to talk about sexuality and whether we can do whatever we want with our sexuality. And then last week, we talked about marriage and singleness, and I have good news for you. We have a lighter topic today. It's about meat.

I love meat. My wife can tell you that. I love to have a little bit of meat at least in every meal. If it doesn't have meat, I don't know if it can be considered a meal. And I think a lot of us here love meat. I know not everyone does. Sorry, Henrika. But I think realistically, I think I could stand up here and probably talk for an hour about meat and not say anything that offends anyone. And I could probably also stand up here for an hour and talk about meat and not say anything that actually impacts anybody's life at all. And the thing about what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8 when he was talking about meat is that it was intended to deeply challenge the way that the people in the city of Corinth were living their lives and call them to a new style of life. What Paul wants them to see in this passage is that if we truly love God, that has to lead to us loving others sacrificially, even to the extent of sometimes giving up our rights for their sake. And he does that with meat. So today we're going to talk about meat. But we're also going to talk about other stuff that hopefully has slightly more impact on our lives than just meat itself. So I want us to first see that true love for God necessarily leads to love for our neighbors. So it seems that there was a conflict in the church at Corinth. Basically, there were there were idols all over the city of Corinth. And what would happen is people would bring animals to sacrifice in the temples of these idols. And they would kill the sheep or the bull or whatever type of animal it was. And they would burn a little bit for the God. And the priest who made the sacrifice would get to keep a little bit for himself to eat. Whoever made the sacrifice would get to keep a little bit for a meal for them and their family. And then whatever meat was left over would be sold in the markets of the city. And most of the meat in the city came from these temple sacrifices. They also had restaurants in the temples that would serve meals cooked with the meat from these sacrifices. So sort of like if there was like a temple over on the podium here, and they made these sacrifices. And then they took the meat there and they sold it at El Charro and Delaney's and Fusion and McDonald's and Dynasty and all of the restaurants in Cyberport, Starbucks, used this meat from these sacrifices. And basically, there were two groups in the church. One group said, there's only one God. These idols are not real. They have no real existence. And so for us to eat the meat that sacrificed them is just like eating any other meat, because they're nothing. And so the meat sacrificed them has no real power, and it does nothing to our relationship with Christ to eat this meat. The other group said, well, the Bible says we're supposed to worship God alone. And this meat has been used for the worship of false gods. And so we cannot eat this meat, because if we eat this meat, then what happens is we, through our actions, support the worship of those false gods. And these two groups were going back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, and they could not come to a firm decision about who was right. And so they sent a message to the Apostle Paul and said, please clarify this for us. And it seems that the group that wanted to eat meat basically sent in the letter the rundown of their argument for why we should be allowed to eat meat. We know that the idol has no real existence. We know that there's only one God. We know that the meat sacrificed to these idols actually means nothing. It's just meat. And so in 1 Corinthians, what's happening is Paul is responding to this letter. And from the best that we can tell, it seems that what he's doing is

he'll take one line of their letter and quote it, which is why if you have a newer translation, a lot of the lines in the early part of the chapter actually have like quotation marks around them, because we think those are what the church in Corinth wrote to Paul. And so he's quoting them, and then giving commentary, and then quoting a little more, and giving more commentary. And then when he finishes the quotation, he just finishes the commentary with a few verses at the end.

And so what we see is, first off, Paul starts with a response, and it seems that the thrust of the meat eater's argument centered around knowledge. They said, we know this. We know that. We know that all these things are true. And Paul basically says, yeah, okay. He says, I'm not going to search for the hair and the egg. It's an Italian phrase, meaning looking for a fault where there is none. He says, I'm going to go along with your argument. I'm going to give you everything that you say. Sure, you're right. The problem is, you're asking the wrong questions. He says, the Christian life isn't supposed to be about knowledge. It's not about what we know. It's supposed to be built on love.

[5 : 59] He tells them knowledge puffs up. The picture's kind of like a balloon, right? Like you have a balloon, and you blow into it, and it gets puffed up. That's knowledge. The more knowledge you're filled with, the bigger you get, and the more highly you think about yourself. And the more knowledge you have, the more you think that you're better than everyone else around you. And you don't realize that all it takes is a nice little pinprick, and you're right back to where you started. He says, that's not what Christianity is supposed to be about. It's supposed to be about love.

And in contrast to knowledge, which puffs up, love builds up. It's a slower process. It's a more difficult process. But with love, as you build up, you're strengthening the building every step of the way. With knowledge, you add size, but you don't add substance. With love, you add substance and strength, and you build together. Basically, he says, the church shouldn't be full of people who are full of hot air. The church should be full of people who are known and marked by their love for one another. And so the question shouldn't be, what do we know? But who do we love, and what does it look like for us to love them? Because if we truly love God, which is the deepest love, the most true love, which he references in verse 3. He says, if anyone loves God, he is known by God. If we truly love God, number one, that leads to the truest, most valuable knowledge, the knowledge of being known by God. But number two, that will lead us to loving others. And so in verses 4 through 6, he basically goes point by point through their argument and says, you're right on this point, you're right on this point, you're right on this point. An idol has no real existence. Yep, that's true. There's no God but one.

I agree with that. That's biblical. Yes. There may be so-called gods in heaven on earth, as there are indeed many gods and many lords. But for us, there's one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. He says, you are right. That is good theology that you are building your argument on top of. Thumbs up.

The problem is that the argument isn't supposed to be about knowledge. Paul knows the focus of the argument. If he is going to win these people over, he can't focus on the argument about knowledge.

He needs to focus on love. He needs to get them asking the right questions about their behavior. And so he helps them to see that a true love for God must lead to love for others, and that a true love for others often requires sacrifice.

[8 : 57] See, he spends the first half of the chapter affirming every single point of their argument, and then he flips it on its head. He says, yeah, your argument is great. There is no real existence idols. There is no God but one. But then check out verse seven. However, not all possess this knowledge.

It's great that you know this, but not everyone in the church does. It's great that you can eat meat and know that you are not participating in the worship of these idols, but not everyone in your church does.

He says, some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. He says, look, eating meat in and of itself is not a good thing or a bad thing. It's a neutral thing. The thing that makes it good or bad is the attitude that you take when you go to eat it. If you go to eat meat with this attitude that says, this is a gift from God, there is no God but one, then it's not sinful in and of itself for you to eat meat. If you go eat meat with this attitude that says, by eating meat, I'm participating in worship of idols, it is sinful for you to eat meat.

And what he says is, the fact that you have knowledge that this action isn't sinful doesn't make it right for you to do it, because other people in the church will see your actions, and by seeing your actions, they will assume that it's okay for them to follow those actions when it is not. Just because it's okay for you to do doesn't mean that it's okay for everyone else to do. And if you doing what's okay for you pushes your brother and sister in Christ to do something that's sinful for them, then you have sinned by leading them into sin. That's his basic argument.

And it appears that these people had thought that by eating the meat, by showing off how strong their faith was, they were gaining credit with God. Because eating the meat and not seeing it as an act of idol worship, that's a major show of the strength of their faith. But in verse 8, Paul says, food will not commend us to God. We're no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Whether we eat or not doesn't gain us points with God. What God wants is us to love one another, to live sacrificially for one another. He continues that take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. He says that if you continue asserting your rights, although it leads others to sin, it'll make them trip in their faith. It'll make them fall in their faith. For if anyone who sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged if his conscience is weak to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge, this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. He says, yes, your logic is great. Your knowledge is correct.

[12:14] But because you're basing your actions on knowledge rather than on love, you are destroying your brothers and sisters that Christ died for. He says, this is totally unacceptable behavior for the church.

Christ died to rescue these people. And you're so obsessed with your meat, church in Corinth, that you're destroying the people Christ died for in order to assert your own rights.

It's interesting. He said earlier, love builds up. And now he's saying, you are destroying. It's not just that what you're doing is unloving. What you're doing is actually the opposite of love.

It's not, you're not building up. You're tearing down what's already been built up. And it's interesting to note that although he agrees with the logic of the meat eaters, the ones stronger in their faith, he never says the weaker ones have to pull themselves up to this higher level and be better. He says the stronger ones have to lower themselves, not in their understanding, but in their practice, to the level of their weaker brothers and sisters.

The picture I get in my mind when I think about that is like a father helping his son with his homework. The father maybe is an engineer who understands advanced math and the kid is a little five-year-old working on simple addition. If the father comes down to help his son with his homework and starts trying to explain calculus to the kid to help him with his simple addition homework and expects the kid to pull himself up to his level, the kid's just going to be hopeless.

[14:07] I'm never going to get math. I give up. I quit school. I'm going to go find some job that I can do that doesn't require me to know math. I'm out of here. I'm done. And we'd look at the father and say, are you an idiot? But when the father gets down to the five-year-old's level and uses words that the son can understand and concepts that the son can understand to help him do his homework properly, that's a beautiful, loving, good thing. And Paul says to the stronger Christians, when you expect the others to pull themselves up to your level, you're creating hopelessness and despair in them and pushing them away from wanting to follow Christ.

But what God looks at and sees as truly beautiful is when you go down to their level, when you speak to them in words that they can understand and do actions that push them towards knowing Christ and not towards feeling like they'll never be able to make it.

And as Christians, this is exactly what we should expect him to be saying, because this is exactly what God did for us. When we were rebels, when we had turned from God and said, I want nothing to do with you, God didn't say, okay, I'll wait here for you guys to figure yourselves out and come back and get stuff sorted with me. No, Jesus came to the earth. The Bible says in Philippians 2 that although he existed in the form of God, he did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. He emptied himself. He took on the form of a servant. And being found in human form, he humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross. That God didn't just stay far away and expect us to lift ourselves up to his level. He came to us. He took on a form that we could understand and comprehend and relate to.

He communicated with us in a way that connected with us so that he could rescue us and raise us up through that. And he says this model that Jesus has set for us, this thing that has radically

transformed our lives and given us a new hope, needs to control the way that we live on a day-to-day basis now as his followers.

Knowledge is great. Knowledge is good. But the problem is knowledge does not bring the life that Christ wants us to have. Love brings that life.

[16:56] And so Paul says we need to, when we look at that action, we can't just ask, do I know whether it's okay? We need to ask whether it's loving. And because of that, an action that we know is not sinful for us, if it leads another person into sin, can be sinful for us to do.

Because although we've acted in line with our knowledge, we've acted out of line with God's call for us to love one another. The past few weeks we've been talking a lot about community, and Tobin's used the analogy of a boat. And he said, when we are living in community, and someone's sinning, it's like all of us are on a boat together, and someone's just sitting there drilling a hole in the bottom of the boat. And obviously, if you're in a boat and someone's drilling a hole in the bottom of it, you look over there and you say, stop it!

Because you're going to sink the boat. And the thing is, with us, so often we don't say stop it, because we don't realize that the actions that are going on are going to sink the boat. And I think today, in this story, maybe what's going on by them eating meat isn't necessarily drilling holes in the bottom of the boat. Maybe it's more like lighting controlled fires within the boat. You take a bowl, put some kindling in there, send a spark in, get a nice little flame. It's in a controlled space. It's safe. You can enjoy the warmth that it gives you. But the problem is, they're lighting these fires in front of children who don't know the difference between a controlled fire and an open fire. And by lighting the fires, which isn't a bad thing in and of itself, they're encouraging the children to follow in their practice. And the children, when they go to light fires, don't light controlled fires. They light open fires that will destroy the boat. And what he says is, fire is not bad in and of itself. But if you're using fire in this context, it's bound to be destructive. It's bound to burn down the boat. Eating meat is not bad in and of itself.

But if you're eating meat in the context of the Corinthian church, it's bound to be destructive. It's bound to destroy people who Christ died for and push them away from him rather than towards him.

[19:25] And that's why in verse 13, Paul says something that I think would be unimaginable to many of us. He says, therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat lest I make my brother stumble.

Henrique is happy with that one. But I'm pretty sure there are a couple of people in here who are like, if I have to sacrifice for others, just nail me to the cross and let me get it over with. I'd rather do that than give up meat for the rest of my life.

But Paul says, if what it takes for me to love my brothers and sisters is that I never touch meat again, I'll do it. If I never get to have barbecue ribs or a bacon cheeseburger or a nice piece of steak or sausage again in my life, he says it's worth it.

And my stomach hurts just thinking about giving up those things for the rest of my life. But Paul says, it's worth it if that's what it takes to love our brothers and sisters.

Because true love for God must lead to love for others. And true love for others often requires sacrifice. But the good news is that true freedom in our lives is only found through loving God and loving others.

[20:53] I've got some good news. As far as I know, you eating meat will not cause anyone in Watermark Church to turn away from Christ. And so what this passage is calling us to do is not to stop eating meat.

So if you're planning on having steak tonight and then you're like, oh no, I have to change my plans, you don't have to change your plans. If me eating meat does cause anyone to have problems in their relationship with Christ, please talk to me afterwards.

But even though this passage doesn't relate to us in that specific context, it still has major implications for the way that we live our lives as a church today.

Because just like the church in Corinth, there are issues in here, many, many issues, where what's morally neutral in and of itself may be sinful for one person to do and not sinful for another person to do.

And when the person who it's not sinful for does it, it can lead the person who it is sinful for to follow in their footsteps and enter into sin. And what Paul's challenge for us today is, is to sacrifice our rights out of love for one another.

[22 : 06] So the question is, what are those areas in our lives today? The obvious one that everyone always comes to in this passage is alcohol. Is alcohol bad in and of itself? No. Can it be used sinfully?

Absolutely. Is it categorically sinful for us to drink alcohol? No. Can it be sinful for us to drink it? Absolutely. Absolutely. And so you have to be wise in how you drink it.

You don't get drunk. Maybe if there are people who are impressionable around you who will be led to sin by using alcohol if they see you drinking, that means that you temporarily abstain from drinking.

If I'm leading youth on Friday night and all the kids are there, I probably don't want to start pounding down the beers. Just common sense stuff in that area. But I think the big thing for me when it comes to the topic of alcohol in relation to this is to remember that Christ didn't die so that I could have the right to drink beer.

Christ died to bring new life to the world. And if me drinking beer is going to prohibit someone else from enjoying and living in that new life that Christ has purchased for them, then I'm sinning by drinking.

[23 : 16] And what in one sense can be a great ingredient in good Christian fellowship and worship, in another sense, in another situation or context, can be sinful.

Again, I enjoy an occasional drink. I'm not saying that we shouldn't drink at all, but I'm saying that we should be wise. We should look at who's watching us. How will our drinking impact them? Is it loving to drink in that context? And we have to make our decisions based on our answers to those questions, not just based on whether we have the right to do it, whether we know that we can do it without sinning.

Another issue, summer's coming up, clothing. I know that as Christians, we are free to dress however we want.

We have that right in Christ. I also know there are certain outfits that draw attention to certain areas of bodies and lead people's minds in certain directions. And as a guy, I know that this is difficult for us, especially during the summer when clothes get smaller.

[24 : 25] It's true. That when you see an outfit that draws the attention to a certain area, it can cause you to sin. And I know there's a huge argument from girls that the problem's in the guy's mind.

It's not our fault that they're thinking those things. Absolutely. That is true. It is the guy's fault. And as a guy, I am sorry for the way that our minds do those things and the way that our minds go to those places.

And it is not right. However, what Paul is saying here is that if there's an outfit that's going to lead people to think sinfully about you and your body, even though you have the right in Christ to wear it, the loving thing is to maybe cover up a little bit more, to give up the right to be cool or to be trendy. What he's saying is, say that there's a community group going out to lunch after church and some girl from the community group shows up in her lingerie to lunch and she's sitting there eating lunch. She can say all lunch long, I love my brothers in this community group. Her actions are speaking against her words. And although she has the right in Christ to wear that outfit to lunch, it is sinful because it is drawing attention and pointing people towards sinful thoughts.

[25 : 50] And so what Paul is saying is, we need to be careful how we dress. And I'm not trying to be puritanical here. I'm not trying to institute a church dress code. But what I'm saying is that if we're a church that's going to be marked by love, we need to think about these issues.

We need to think about how what we're wearing will impact the other people around us. Another issue, this one I think is bigger for the Chinese culture, tomb sweeping.

I know for a lot of Christian families, tomb sweeping is a great chance to go honor dead relatives and thank God for the family that he has blessed us with. But for many in the Chinese culture, going to visit the tombs of their ancestors on tomb sweeping day is an act of worship of ancestors.

And they cannot set foot in the cemetery without seeing it as an act of worship of something other than God. And so what Paul is saying here is that we need to be aware.

If there's someone who's come from that background where they see the trips to go tomb sweeping as an act of worship of their ancestors, and they see us going to do tomb sweeping, even though it's not sinful for us to be there and we don't see it as worship of our ancestors, how will it impact them?

[27 : 09] And again, I'm not saying that we shouldn't go to tomb sweeping, but I'm saying we need to be aware. We need to think these issues through. We need to think through not just what do we know we can do, but based on love, what we should do.

For my job, another big one is movies. Right? There are so many movies out there today that are so good, except for like that one or two sex scenes or those one or two incredibly violent scenes. And I know that I can go sit in those movies, maybe like look away for a couple scenes. We're good. A couple hours of good entertainment. The problem is I work with teenagers.

And so if I go see these movies, and they hear that I've seen these movies, I can tell them all I want, that I looked away during those scenes, all they're going to hear is, Eric saw it, we can see it. And they're not looking away during those scenes. And if there's a teenager in my group who's struggling with pornography, and he hears that I've seen this movie, and he assumes that it's okay for him to go see this movie because I've seen it, and he sees those scenes, and they cause him to stumble back into that sin that he's been fighting hard against, then even though I wasn't watching those scenes, me seeing that movie is sinful.

[28 : 31] And regardless of how much I tell them, I looked away during those scenes. I didn't see it. I didn't do that. They're not going to hear that. They're not going to listen to that. They're not going to follow that. They're going to see the movie in its entirety, and it could lead them into sin.

And so there are certain movies that, as a youth worker, I just have to avoid or at least not see while they're in theaters because I know that if the kids hear me, hear that I've gone to see that, that it will lead them to sin in those areas.

And there are dozens more examples of what this could look like in our lives. One I think that's sort of fresh on my mind as a recently married guy is in the dating relationship.

There are certain scenarios that you can be in while you're dating that don't lead to sin for you, but that if other people hear that you've been in those scenarios, could lead them to sin.

One specific example is that when Justine and I were dating, there were times where we'd be hanging out late at night. And the way easier, way more convenient thing to do would have just been to sleep on one another's couches because it's closer to work and saves a 45-minute commute home.

[29 : 44] But I knew that if my youth heard that we were sleeping over at one another's houses, there's no way that I could explain to them in a way that they would believe that we were not sleeping together. It wasn't going to happen.

And so I knew that for the sake of the youth, I would have to send her home or go home every night, add an extra 45 minutes to the commute, to save the youth from thinking that it was okay for them to follow us.

Because even though we could sleep on one another's couches without that leading to sin, if the youth saw us doing that or if other singles in the church saw us doing that, it could lead them to sin. And therefore, us sleeping on one another's couches, even though nothing would have happened, would have been sin for us. And I think each of us needs to think through where are the areas in our lives where what is sinful for me may not be sinful for someone else, so I shouldn't follow them there, or what's not sinful for me may be sinful for someone else, so I shouldn't lead them there. Maybe you can have loads and loads and loads of money in your bank account without it leading you towards greed or towards placing your faith in money. But if you do that and other people see your lifestyle, will that lead them to place their hope in money or lead them to pursuing greed?

[31 : 09] If so, then it may be sinful to have loads of money in your bank account. And I'm not saying it's categorically sinful to have money in your bank account or that we shouldn't do that. But I'm saying we need to consider what is the loving thing for our neighbor and how are our actions influencing them.

Maybe you have amazing time management and you're able to work 65 hours a week and still be an amazing husband and father. But maybe there's someone else in the church who's looking up to you and sees that example that you're setting of working so hard and decides that they want to pursue that and they pursue crazy work hours, but for them it leads to the neglect of their family. What example are we setting for one another? And I know there are people here who are pretty sure that no one's watching so it doesn't matter how they act.

But I can pretty much guarantee you somebody is watching. If you're a parent, your kids are watching. If you're married or dating, your spouse or significant other is watching.

If you're in your 20s or 30s, the teenagers are watching. If you're a teenager, the little kids are watching. If you're a supervisor at your workplace, your employees are watching. And if you're in a community group, the members of your community group are watching.

[32 : 29] And if you're genuinely in a place where nobody is watching you, it's probably a really dangerous place to be. So if you're genuinely in a place where nobody is watching you, please come find me or Chris Thornton after the service and we would love to help you get connected with a community group.

Because community is essential as a Christian. And yeah, it's a pain that people are going to watch you and you have to give up your rights for their good rather than just doing what you want to and what you have the right to do.

But it's the example Christ set for us. It's what he calls us to do. And I also know that there are probably people sitting here today saying, Eric, who are you?

You're just a kid. You have no right to tell me how to live my life. And you're right. I don't know what the situations are that are going on in your life right now and what the correct response in these morally neutral areas are.

But I hope that as you sit and you think through these issues in your life, that you will know what these areas are and what the correct response is.

[33 : 34] Because what God wants us to learn today is that our actions need to be motivated by love. We can't just be motivated by ourselves or by our desires or by our knowledge.

It needs to be motivated by love. And it's the example, again, the example that Jesus set for us. not acting based on what was due to him, but acting based on love for us.

And I know that what I'm saying clashes against everything society teaches us about how we need to stand up for our rights and fight for what's ours. But the truth is, true freedom doesn't lie in being able to get everything we deserve.

It lies in being able to give up what we want and we deserve. And if you don't believe me, think about this. Society has a word for people who need to constantly get what they desire and deserve and who can't give it up.

The word is addicts. Does anyone really think that an addict is free? They're able to have as much as they want of whatever they want.

[34 : 55] They're not able to walk away when what they want becomes destructive to them. True freedom lies not in being able to get what we want. It lies in being able to give up what we want.

out of love for others and out of what is good for others. And that's what Christ is calling us today. It's true freedom. You know, I've referred a few times today to the example of Christ and how he humbled himself and he lowered himself for us.

Do you know, according to the Bible, why he did that? Hebrews chapter 12 says that he did it for the joy set before him. It's the pattern of the Christian life.

suffering now, exaltation later. Sacrifice now, joy later. It's the example that Christ has given to us. Laying down his life. But then what was the response? That God raised him up and gave him the name that is above every other name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

[35 : 59] And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And because of that, he calls us to work out our salvation now.

Because Jesus has set the example for us of suffering now and finding joy later, of sacrifice now and exaltation later, that is the pattern for how our Christian lives are supposed to look.

Not fighting for our rights, but sacrificing for the good of others. not holding on to what we deserve and what we need, but giving it up out of love for others.

And if what we believe about God is true, then there's a promise for us that everything we sacrifice will be more than paid back someday by God. But it's a question of having an eternal perspective. Perspective that says, if what it takes to love my brother is never eating meat again, forget it, I'm never eating meat again. And so I want to leave us with some questions to reflect on throughout this week.

[37 : 05] And hopefully will help us take this and make it more applicable to our lives. The first one, what are the areas in your life where you can do things that are morally neutral without sinning, but you doing them could lead others into sin?

What are the areas in your life that are morally neutral and that you can do without sinning, but where you doing them could lead others into sin?

Second, in these areas, do you have a pattern of primarily acting out of love for others or of fighting for the rights that you deserve? in these areas, do you have a pattern of primarily acting out of love for others or holding on to and fighting for the rights that you deserve?

Third, where are the areas where you would say you're the weaker brother and you need to practice discernment in not following someone else into one of these morally neutral areas? where are the areas that you are the weaker brother and you need to practice discernment or sister and you need to practice discernment in not following someone else into these morally neutral areas?

Fourth, if everyone in the church approached these morally neutral areas with the same attitude that you do, how healthy would the church be? If everyone in the church approached these morally neutral areas with the same attitude that you do, how healthy would the church be?

[39 : 04] And finally, if everyone in the church brought the same attitude as you do towards these morally neutral areas, what would be our reputation in the community? would we be known as a church that's full of love that builds one another up?

Or would we be a church that's known for being full of people who are full of hot air of knowledge that's puffed us up but that have no real substance?

If everyone approached, if everyone in the church approached these morally neutral areas with the same attitude as you do, what would be our reputation in the world around us? Would people see us and have a desire to come follow Christ?

The only way we're going to be able to respond properly in these areas is by looking to the example of Jesus. He humbled himself for us.

He sacrificed himself for us and he set the pattern for our lives of suffering now and exaltation later.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your love for us.

[40 : 17] We thank you for Jesus who came and set the pattern for our lives. We thank you for his sacrificial life, for his love and for him willingly sacrificing himself for us for the joy set before him.

And I pray that as we think about what it means for us to follow you in our lives that we would see this not as suffering but as joy. we would see this not as being trapped but as a path to true freedom.

That we wouldn't be addicts who have to hold on to everything that we want and desire but that we would be children of you who know that everything we need for life we have in Christ and because of that we can walk freely and sacrifice for the good of others and live in love.

God, we thank you again for your love for us. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.