

Topic	How the Gospel Works in Relationships
Reference	1 Corinthians 8
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We know that when we are chosen, we are all part of this big family but then the problem is, in the Corinthian church there were some problems with trying to workout the relationships with each other. There were temples and people around them, who were worshipping a lot of foreign gods. Some Christians thought it was okay to go to the temple and eat together with the people. It was causing a bit of a tension in the church, but they actually presented the problem to Paul as a problem of food being offered to idols. They didn't see the real problem was actually the relationships that they had. So today I hope I will be able to present that dimension to you and hopefully it also increases our understanding of what the gospel requires for us in terms of relationship.

1 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But **knowledge puffs up** while love builds up. **2** Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. **3** But whoever loves God is known by God.

Knowledge is power nowadays. One of the biggest companies in the world today is Google. Google started when the internet was very slow, and it was a search provider then. Today from being just a company that collects information, they have become one of the wealthiest companies in the world. They have 1.2 million terabytes of data with them. Just because of data itself, they knew from the data what to invest and what to do, they became so powerful. With the amount of data, they can tell what you are going to do before you are going to do. It is kind of scary.

Knowledge is futile too. At one point they say rice is not good and another instance, they say rice is good. Health industry has been like that. The global hair loss product companies will reach 934 million dollars a year and guess what the world's richest man doesn't even have hair. It obviously means that hair products don't work. We spend so much in the industry, trying to get our hair to grow back but actually nobody can even stop our hair from falling down. Knowledge is futile in that way, but certainly somehow along the way when we acquire knowledge, we don't realize these two dynamics. It is powerful but it is also futile and it leads us to a type of pride.

The pharisees thought that they knew, they knew what it takes to get salvation and so much so it puff them up that they decided that the only savior that we know today is not the savior or the messiah that they want. Certainly, knowledge is not we need today, because we already possess knowledge, but it puffs up. What we need today is love. It builds up.

Knowledge that is subordinate to love becomes beneficial. Christian love builds up and overrides knowledge that feeds arrogance. Christian love is not blind but is to be informed by knowledge. In 1 Cor 13:2, we go down the book, actually 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, it is all building up to this climax where he talks about the communion and we take it and he says really if you have everything but you do not have love you gain nothing. That was the point he was trying to make to the Corinthian church. It seems that the church has acquired so much knowledge, has acquired so much ability, has acquired so much riches but they have not acquired the thing that matters most that is love. Jesus replied the most important thing

Matthew 22: 37:39

Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The gospel is not just about our vertical relationship, but it is also about our horizontal relationships. So if you want to claim that you love God, you must also love people. The scripture says, but whoever loves God is known by God. Deeper than knowing God is being known by Him. Knowledge about salvation/gospel does not save us, being known by God is ultimately what saves us.

If you want to be known by God, you don't only need to look at and work on this horizontal relationship. Out of the Ten Commandments only four talk about the relationship with God, the other six talk about the relationships with people. So if we are going to deceive ourselves to believe that if I love God that is enough. It has to come to a point where we have to realize that loving each other, if you know God you would love each other. That's the funny thing. The pharisees thought they knew God. Of all people, the pharisees were the one that claim this and they know it so well.

A Jewish kid by the time they are 12 years old have memorized the Torah like word for word. The pharisees memorize way more than that. They know the word of God better than you and I and yet all that knowledge was not going to

save them. What they needed to see was that they needed to love and there was story after story how the pharisees would go and pray. They will always compare themselves with others. This was happening in the Corinthian church. Somehow along the way, I don't know about this, but Christians start to compare. They start to compare with what they have or even start to compare our spirituality. My fear is that after we have known all these things, so what, if the fruit of all that we know does not result in love. In the middle of the verse it says,

2 Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know.

The worst attitude in life is to think that you know. George Washington Carver found 145 ways to use the peanut. So he is so famous for that. When he was a young man, he said God please tell me the mysteries of the universe. God answered him, sorry but that knowledge is reserved for me alone. So then he said, then God how about just the mystery of a peanut. Then God said, well George that's about your size. That's how he got all the revelations of all the things in the peanuts, because he thought he needed to know all the answers to life but what he needed to know and all that he could acquire or his brain could fit was just a tiny peanut. We always think we know everything.

The knowledge that God gave his son for us and the gave us a love for one another. Humans are mystery, if peanuts have so many things that it can do God created us so much more complex than a peanut. To know each other, it is going to take more than just knowledge and in fact it is so intimate the word 'know' that when the bible uses the word 'know' in Genesis, when Adam knew his wife, it was not just in the head, it was physical and intimate.

The Corinthian church was growing with different levels of conscious in the gospel. Some of the people understood the love of God and that freedom that he sets free and so they were okay. They were like there are no other gods, there is only one True God, so it doesn't matter what we eat. There were others that also reach a point in verse 5 says that, we realize that idols don't really exist. All the temple gods are just statues, they mean nothing. So surely it will not defile us. But the levels of this reality is not the same for everyone. The knowledge of God's love for us, everyone of us is same.

We in the church all know that God loves us, we all know that God is true but not all has come to that reality. There are these different realities and for everyone it is not the same. In the church some people were still perceiving that food offered to idols are defiled, but the question that is more important at this point is not whether it is right to eat food offered to idols or not. The question that is

important is, so how should we respond to those who love God and are known by him. So the answer is there, we need to love others the way God loves us.

9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

Paul is saying the Corinthians church to exercise love and not exercise rights. The problem with us is not about stumbling block. We Christians come with a responsibility that is larger than just about whether we have the right to exercise our rights. Instead of focusing on our rights, let us love someone else to let our rights go. God chose to give up His rights so that we may be chosen to inherit Him. That's what the story of communion is. If God says, it is my right to sit on my throne, it is my right as God to wipe these people out, it is my right as the sovereign to do what I believe is right, we will all be gone, but he says my rights are not as important as how much I love you.

So exercising our rights at the expense of our brothers and sisters, Paul was saying, it is even scarier, it is sinning against Christ.

11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Now that's a scary thought. It is so easy to fall into the trap of doing things out of just exercising rights rather than love. If we are all working for the sake of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, we no longer have to worry about being stumbling blocks.

When I held my son first time in my arms and it felt like whatever rights as a father I have to do, I would be willing to give it up all for him and little did I know when I think that way, how much things I have to give up. I have to give up sleep, I have to give up watching TV. Out of love for my son, I will avoid all things that can stumble him, can affect his life.

Paul in the act of communion when he talks about this is to tell the Corinthian church when we want to love one another, when we want to exercise our rights, the first face we should see is the torn Jesus face. The face that was broken for us. This is the face of love. This is the face who is saying that I am willing to give up my rights because I love another person more than myself. So what I have all knowledge, so what if I have all knowledge in the universe but in the mind I do not have love.