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| Book | 1-Corinthians |
| Topic | The Christian and Culture |
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Today we are going to learn a principle, how you manage culture and some of the temptations that come along in our lives as Christians. There are so many issues in the world today that were not present when people wrote the bible in those days. We are confronted of so many things like:

- Should we actually have Santa Claus when we do Christmas?
- Should we read Harry Potter books?

So how does Paul deal with culture which involves temptation as well. Basically, we see him deal with it through the prism of food offered to idols. So he uses a topic called food offered to idols and used that in order to then explore how we deal with not only food offered to idols but so many other things that apply to our normal Christian lives.

In chapter 8 we learn about the dimension of knowledge that involves love. So loving knowledge. Chapter 9 will talk about Christian liberty. You got liberty to do all things but not all things are helpful and certain things you may do because of Love. That has got to do with dealing with culture. Dealing with temptations of culture in Chapter 10. So all the three chapters are actually related.

In chapter 8 we are going to learn four things

1. Knowledge alone cannot be the sole basis for action (vv 1-6)
2. Different people have differing level of knowledge and consciences (vv 7-8)
3. People are stumbled by imitating our behavior but not having our conscience vv9-11
4. True freedom is found in the exercise of both love and knowledge (v. 13 and 1 Cor 10:25-29)

The Issue of Knowledge:

1 Corinthians 8:1-4 (ESV) **1 Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.**

To the world today knowledge is power. Michel Foucault says, *“knowledge is always an exercise of power and power is always a function of knowledge”*

It goes right as far back as the man called Ford who created the car. When he first had a problem with his assembly line the generator stopped. There is no electricity. all cars were piled up; they couldn't make any cars. So they call in an electrician, his name was Charlie Stimitz. He fixed that problem and then he sent Henry Ford a bill of about 10,000 dollars in those days. So Henry Ford complained bitterly to him, he said you must justify your bill and give me a detail work down of what

it is. He said, “for tinkering around your factory I charge you 10 dollars, for knowing where to tinker 9990 dollars.” So it is actually knowledge.

We use knowledge to deal with culture. In those days there were lots and lots of temples in the times of Corinth in 1855. This is the life which revolved around the temple, not like today. The life here revolves around the market place or your pub but in those days everything evolves around the temples and people rarely ate meat. The only time you eat meat was when you went to the temple and you actually attended a party or a dedication. But when you go to the market where they sell the meat, all the meat has been offered to idols first and then only they sell in the market. So you live in a society where this is a problem and when you go to the feast in the temple, not only they have the meat there, they eat the meat offered to idols, they also have sex because sexual encounters with the prostitutes which are the priestesses are common place. They are part and parcel of their religion. So it is the sex, it is the temple and is the food all grouped together.

a. Knowledge alone causes pride

It is like a big fat fish, you really puff up, you look bigger than what you actually are and it is quite small. That is that it happened in those days. People puffed themselves up with knowledge. They lived in the time of Plato, Socrates and Pythagoras (scientists of that time) and knowledge made them powerful, they could hold huge audiences sitting down there who would pay money to actually go and listen to them. So knowledge is power, but knowledge alone causes pride and divisions. If we look back in Corinthians

1 Corinthians 4:6-7 *have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. 7 For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

So they were people not only beset with this problem of food offered to idols but in their own self they prided themselves in knowledge, knowledge will cause them to be divided.

1 Corinthians 4:18-19 *18 Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.*

1 Corinthians 5:2 *And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? ..*

So these are arrogant people and the first thing they will fall back on as the basis of their self-esteem is knowledge.

b. Our knowledge is always deficient

Corinthians 8:2 *If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.*

Here Paul is trying to tell you that your knowledge is limited. Paul says that if you think that you know everything then you know nothing, there is something wrong with you. That is a very important principle. So our current knowledge actually has a cognitive gap. There is a gap in our knowledge he is saying and that gap is

This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. 2 If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. 3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

The gap is that they haven’t thought about love. The missing dimension is love.

Dimensional Gap

There are two ways to think about it. Knowledge conceptually, which is a cognitive part and relationally. We must be able to understand the truth which is given to us by the word of God but to truly understand you must be able to apply it relationally. True knowledge does not lead us to be insensitive to others

Proof that true knowledge includes love

3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

We are talking about knowledge puffs up and you don’t have love and suddenly he says, you don’t have all the knowledge but if anyone loves God, he is known by God. First, he was talking about your knowledge, suddenly he jumps to God’s knowledge of you. If God knows you then you love God and if you think about it the most important thing is that if you look at the bomb that was blasted in Manchester and some people died and one of the folk who actually died is a young lady called Georgina Bethany Gallagher and she has a picture with her good friend Ariana Grande. The important thing is that Ariana Grande knows her. All of us know Ariana Grande but she doesn’t know us and that is exactly what the point Paul has. Paul says that the important thing is that God knows you.

Galatians 4:8-9 8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

We always talk about us knowing God as if we are very clever. We have to be known by God before you actually know God and God knows you before the foundation of the world and the most beautiful thing in the world is to be known by God before even the foundation of the world.

Luke 10:20 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

So the issue is not you knowing God but God knows you. A commentator writes

“Moreover, the way that we are known by God is not because of our knowledge, but because of the love which God has produced within us for Himself”

So if we love God it means God knows us. How does that work in the argument of love puffs up, knowledge puffs up. Knowledge is deficient, knowledge puffs up, love builds up and the prime example is that you love God. If you love God, it means He must have known you before and He has

transformed your life that is why the argument is. So God knows you and He transforms you and we love God in between. So the fact that you love God is evidence that knowledge includes the dimension of love.

Timothy 1:5 “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith”

All the learning of the world is useless if your life doesn't translate it. Michel Foucault says “*knowledge is always an exercise of power and power always a function of knowledge*”. This is what the world believes. For Christian alternative knowledge must lead to love.

Different people have differing level of knowledge and consciences (vv 7-8)

So we look at two different kinds of people that he describes as strong and weak.

The Strong

1 Corinthians 8:4 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." 5 For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth- as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"- 6 yet for us there is 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.

The Weak

7 However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8 Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

So it really doesn't matter whether we eat or not, but their consciences are weak.

The Need to Be Consistent

Romans 14:23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

So basically in our brains we have knowledge and we have experience. Knowledge have to mix with experience and then it produces conscience and conscience will guide us in a way we actually live. So Paul is saying we actually have to be consistent with our conscience. If we act our conscience, we are not sinning. If we are acting away from our conscience, beyond our conscience then we have sinned and that is guilt. If you act against your conscience you will basically stumble.

3. People are stumbled by imitating our behaviour but not having our conscience (vv 8-11)

1 Corinthians 8:8-11 (ESV) Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. 9 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if anyone 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? 11 And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.

Consequences of stumbling others

11 And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. 12 Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

Romans 14:23 - 15:1 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

So this is stumbling. This issue of stumbling has been misapplied in so many churches. There is a difference between a weak brother and a legalist although they may still both be one.

What is not stumbling?

- Professional weak brother
- Anything new or novel refuse to change
- Control the church.

Charles Swindoll wrote the book "The Grace Awakening". He tells a true story of a missionary couple who went to South American, joined a missionary compound and people there were supposed to live and serve the people who were in a tribe and so one day they discovered that actually they smuggled in some peanut butter and started eating it and started to pass it around to share with their colleagues and the colleagues were aghast, "my god you actually imported peanut butter. This is for the high class people, we must be like the poor, so therefore we cannot eat peanut butter" and they were stumbled. So the poor missionary couple had to hide their peanut butter but they were addicted to peanut butter. So every week they would still import peanut butter and they would fight with other people because of the peanut butter and because of peanut butter this family quit becoming missionaries and went back to America to start a peanut butter farm.

How does knowledge and love work together?

So if you have wine that we know is right to drink wine, we know there is nothing wrong with eating the idol offered food because it is just meat. Now, if we look at other people. If they come to the church and see some leader taking wine and having a good time and telling to others that Jesus made wine and there is nothing wrong of it. That other person who is listening may be brought up in a church or a place where wine is totally forbidden and there are a lot of churches like that. But if your drinking of wine causes one person to follow you and drink wine and they got condemned then we have done a wrong thing. But then there is another population in the church who no matter what the leader say they will never drink, they will just criticize. These are not weak, these are called legalist and legalist like to control the church. The church is a prime fertile ground to grow legalist.

To stumble a brother means the person must follow you. 95% of stumbling is just legalist who are trying to impose their standards onto the rest of us. So this is difficult that is why we need to apply this principle of knowledge with love in so many different case histories.

Peter and Paul in Galatians, Peter use to eat with the gentiles because we are all one in Christ, no need to eat any kosher food, but when the Jews from James came from Jerusalem, suddenly he left them and sat with the Jews and ignored the gentiles. Paul was very angry. Was Peter afraid of stumbling the Jews?

Galatians 2:11-14 (ESV) But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

So Barnabas became guilty of hypocrisy. In Barnabas's heart eating with gentiles is correct but because Peter runs away from gentiles and eat only with the Jews, he follows him, he eats with them but his heart and his conscience knows that it is wrong to do this because you betray the gospel, because you are going to tell the gentiles that your gospel is no good, you are second class. So Peter's behavior stumbled Barnabas. Paul in front of everybody confronted them.

You cannot live and act in such a way that will betray the central tenet of the gospel. If you have a theological issue which is the central tenet of the gospel, then you have to stand up and that even in public you need to stand your ground. I mean food offered to idol, you eat, you won't die, don't eat you won't die. So that is all a small matter but talking about this sort of thing it actually jeopardizes the gospel which you preach. Because of the integrity to gospel Paul stood up. So there are times when you have to stand up even publically.

4. True freedom is found in the exercise of both love and knowledge (v. 13 and 1 Cor 10:25-29)

1 Corinthians 8:13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

So therefore there is a situation that if you have a brother like that and he could be stumbled then at that particular time you don't drink the wine, you go home and drink yourself. So that person is not stumbled. Paul pose two things. He will argue in chapter 10 that when you go to the temple

1 Corinthians 10:19-22 (ESV) What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Here there is a counter argument. He is saying yes idols are nothing, the idol food is offered to demons, so because it is offered to demons. He is telling that if you are eating the food in the temple that is offered to idols you are participating in fellowship with demons and you cannot do that and come to church and take the Lord's Supper which celebrates our union with Christ. So he is telling them don't be too smart. Don't go to temple, don't eat the food.

What about the situation when you go to the market and you buy the food already offered to idols?

1 Corinthians 10:25 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience...

So when you go to the market close your eyes, don't go for Halal section, buy anything. So if you go to someone house and eat with them and they say, this has been offered in sacrifice then don't eat it for the sake of the one who informed you.

So whenever you are doing something:

1. First thing you need to do is to check that does it involve the gospel. If your action betrays the gospel you should not compromise.
2. Secondly you have to see what is the true knowledge behind your action and how would it affect the people around me.