

Gray Areas

1 Corinthians 10:23 – 11:1

Objectives: We want to identify the gray areas in our lives and be able to learn the biblical principles to help us to make the right/wise choices when faced with these situations.

Launch

- **What are actions that are always right to do in the Bible (virtues)?**
- **What are actions that are always wrong (sin)?**
- **What are some actions that are not clearly labeled “right” or “wrong” in the Bible (Gray Areas)?**
- **Does this mean we can never know what to think or do with actions not addressed in the Bible?**

In the book of 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul gives the church in Corinth principles about making decision regarding Gray Areas.

Before we look at the passage there are 2 things that will help you understand their situation...

1. Corinth was a major cosmopolitan city in Greece. Most of the Christians in the church came from immoral backgrounds worshipping pagan gods. These followers of Christ were gifted in many ways, but had many sinful struggles including sexual immorality, pride and idolatry. These things are clearly wrong in the Bible. They also had questions about some areas not explicitly addressed in the Bible.
2. The main religion of the day was to worship many gods (idolatry) who were believed to control earthly events. The worship of these gods included immoral sexual practices. It also included offering and eating of animal sacrifices given to appease the gods and to receive blessing from them.

The Corinthian Christians were wondering if it is ok to eat this meat that was sacrificed. They also wondered if it was honoring to God if they would attend a celebration which

includes the eating of meat that has been sacrificed to idols.

Explore

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23 – 11:1

Break people into groups of 3. Give them each a copy of the passage in the New Living Translation.

- **Identify principles that Paul uses as he seeks to help the Corinthians decide how to live set apart lives with this Gray Area.**
- **Share principles in large group, writing them on a white board.**

Summarize:

4 questions to ask when confronted with a Gray Area (4 H's):

1. **Is it Helpful (10:23)?** Is it beneficial for me? Does it help me or others grow spiritually?
2. **Is it Hurtful to me or to another person (10:24-33; cf 8:13)?** Could my behavior cause a non-Christian to ignore the gospel or disregard Christ? Could my behavior cause a brother or sister to stumble into sin? Could this Gray Area lead me into sin? (for further study see Romans 14:20-21)
3. **Is it Honoring to God (10:31)?** Glorifying God means to exalt God, to please Him by seeking His interests above our own interests. If I take part in this action would I bring glory to God or bring dishonor to Him? Can I do this action to the glory of God?
4. **Is it habit forming (6:12)?** Will this enslave me? Will it have power over me to control my thoughts or actions?

Apply

Get back in your groups.

- Pick a common Gray Area that people deal with and apply the principles.
- **First, ask if this is a Gray Area or if it is a sin?** It is common to try to justify sin by calling it a Gray Area.
- **Apply the 4 H's principles to your Gray Area.**
- **Based on these principles, how should you live with regard to your Gray Area?**
- **What will keep you from living this way?**
- **Do you have someone in your life that you can talk about Gray Areas with?**

Please remember that if it is truly a Gray Area, then it is ok if Christians do not agree about how to live with this Gray Area. Each of us will have to give an account of ourselves to God. We can fool each other, but we can not fool God, we will each have to give an account on how we lived for Him.

¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written:

"'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'"

¹² So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

Romans 14:10-12

Pray that we would live lives that honor God...

Other passages to look at:

1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1

Romans 14:13-15:7

Principles from the passage

²³ You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is beneficial. ²⁴ Don’t be concerned for your own good but for the good of others.

²⁵ So you may eat any meat that is sold in the marketplace without raising questions of conscience. ²⁶ For “the earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it.”

²⁷ If someone who isn’t a believer asks you home for dinner, accept the invitation if you want to. Eat whatever is offered to you without raising questions of conscience. ²⁸ (But suppose someone tells you, “This meat was offered to an idol.” Don’t eat it, out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you. ²⁹ It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person.) For why should my freedom be limited by what someone else thinks? ³⁰ If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why should I be condemned for eating it?

³¹ So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Don’t give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God. ³³ I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don’t just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved. 11 And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 (New Living Translation)