

The New International Version translation is used for the questions.

- 1. Read Romans 14:1-23. In 14:1-4, it speaks about a dispute in the church at that time over eating meat, why was this a dispute at that time? What does Paul tell those who eat meat and those who do not? What is Paul's opinion about the meat from verse 14?
- 2. What are some activities that Christians today disagree about whether we should do them but are not mentioned in the Bible? Which side of these issues are you on? What does Paul say to each person in 14:20-23 no matter which side of the issue you are on? What do you think it means to make someone stumble?
- 3. Pastor Rick said there are three reasons that we reject each other that should not happen, what are they? Have you ever experienced any of these in a church? Have you ever been guilty of doing one of these?
- 4. In his message Pastor Rick said that there are six things we must do in order to accept each other and have unity. The first one is found in 14:1, what is it?
- 5. The second one is found in 14:15, what was it? What does this mean on a practical level? The third one is in 14:16,17, what is it?
- 6. The fourth one is found in 14:20, what is it? What does it mean to "limit my liberty out of love"?
- 7. The fifth one is from 14:22, what is it?
- 8. In Romans 15:1-3, what example are we given to follow when it comes to the idea of always doing what pleases us or makes us happy?

## **ANSWERS**

- 1. At that time, many of the pagan religions that existed at the time required their followers to bring animals to sacrifice, much like the Israelites did. The priests of these pagan religions would take the meat that was left over from the sacrifice and then sell it in the market place to support their temples. Many Christians who had come out of those pagan religions thought it was wrong to buy and eat that meat because it had been offered in sacrifice to a false God whereas other Christians thought there was nothing wrong with buying and eating that meat. Paul tells them that those who do not eat the meat should not judge those who did eat the meat. He tells those who eat the meat not to look down on those who think it is wrong to eat the meat. In verse 14 Paul tells us that there is actually nothing spiritually wrong with eating the meat because the false gods the meat was offered to do not even exist, so the meat is not "defiled". The very same issue came up in the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 8, it might be good to read through that chapter also.
- Some of the activities that have been issues in churches are: Christians should not drink alcohol or take drugs because we should not be controlled by anything other than the Holy Spirit; Christians should not dance because rubbing your body against another person creates sexual temptation and dancing is not a good testimony: Christians should not go to movies. especially movies rated R or worse because of what it puts into you mind and is a bad testimony; Christians should not use tobacco in any form because of the damage it does to the body and it is a bad example to others; have your group think of some others. The first thing Paul says is that none of these things are worth doing if they destroy someone's walk with God and cause them to stumble. Then he says that whatever you believe about these areas, keep it to yourself. This also means not to do the activity in the presence of Christians who think it is wrong because to make them stumble means that because they see you do it, they then think its okay to do it and they follow your example. Paul then says that if you have any doubt as to whether something is wrong to do, you should not do it because it would be sin for you to do it because you do not have faith that God would be okay with you doing the activity. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Note: Just because someone thinks that it is wrong to do something is not what makes them stumble, it is if they think it is wrong and then use you as their justification to go ahead and do it when they have doubts.
- 3. The three reasons are: a. Our minor differences in belief; b. Our minor differences in what we eat or drink; c. Our desire to make others more like us in faith and actions.
- 4. The first thing we must do to have unity is to build each other up instead of judging each other.
- 5. The second one is to value everyone enough to limit my personal desires. On a practical level this means to not participate in activities around Christians who think the activity is wrong. An example would be I will not drink alcohol around Christians who think it is wrong. This means we must be considerate enough to find out what would cause Christians I am around to stumble. When in doubt, do without, that is loving them. The third one is to focus on what's important rather than the insignificant. This means to focus on the spiritual welfare of those around me rather than on what I want to do.
- 6. The fourth one is to limit my liberty out of love. This means that even though scripture does not say you cannot eat the meat, because of your love for those around you, you limit yourself for their welfare when you are around those who might stumble over your actions.

- 7. The fifth is to refuse to force my opinions or standards on someone else. If we cannot give a clear scriptural reason for our opinion, we should not force it on anyone, besides, forcing never works
- 8. Jesus is our example, he never did anything or his own good or desires, only what was good for others.