

8. Acts 15 — Balance Liberty with Love

“In essentials, Unity, in non-essentials, Liberty, in all things, Love”

The book of Romans clearly teaches that Christians are free from bondage to the Jewish Law given by God through Moses, which governed the daily life of every Israelite. Christ brings liberty. But, with liberty comes responsibility. Romans 14 reveals that to enjoy our liberty without offending one another within a love-bonded community, we must **balance liberty with love**.

Is it a moral issue?

ABSOLUTES are truths essential to the Christian faith, never change and are true for every believer, in every nation, during every time period of history.

- Absolute doctrines are those defining true Christianity.
- Absolute behaviors are those specifically revealed in the scriptures as right or wrong as we seek to love God and glorify Him.

NON-ABSOLUTES are not essential to the Christian faith. They can change over time and can be different in every culture and every time period.

- Jesus may give us a PERSONAL CONVICTION about something that is right or wrong for us individually. They can change over time as we grow in our faith.
- PREFERENCES are issues on which you have a personal liking, but aren't right or wrong for anyone.

Is it stunting someone's spiritual growth?

- 1 Corinthians 10:23—Principle #1: I may have the complete freedom to do something myself, but it may not be beneficial to me or to those around me. Jesus and me need to determine that.
- 1 Corinthians 8:10—Principle #2: There is a distinction between public and private use of liberty. When your brother or sister “sees you” and is distressed by what you are doing, that's a signal that you need to talk to Jesus about whether or not to do that activity.

Is it disrupting unity within the Body of Christ?

For every issue:

- What are the facts?
- Is this a moral issue? Is it stunting someone's spiritual growth? Is it disrupting unity within the Body of Christ?
- How should I respond?

Talk to Jesus about any issue that you don't know how to handle. If it's a moral issue, Jesus will not only show you where in His Word to find the answer. He'll also give you the strength to stand firm on His truth. If it's a non-absolute, He'll let you know within your heart whether it's right or wrong for you. If He doesn't give you a personal conviction about it, you can follow your preferences and enjoy your liberty.

Whenever any other person is distressed by your freedom, **balance your liberty with love**.