

# 1 Corinthians 10 (Part 4): 23-33 •

## Principles for Godly Living

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Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and we're picking it up in verse 23. Have you ever met someone who tells you something and then summarizes what they told you? That person probably has a teaching gift, even if they don't know it, because that's one of the hallmarks of a teacher. They say things, and then they say them again, and then they reemphasize them. And then they'll even often say, so in summary. That's a teacher.

Paul being a teacher also, he's going to use these last verses of chapter 10 to summarize things that he's been saying since back in chapter 8. Let's go ahead and read these verses beginning in verse 23 through the end of the chapter.

It says, *“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.* <sup>24</sup> *Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.* <sup>25</sup> *Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience.* <sup>26</sup> *For “the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.”* <sup>27</sup> *If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.* <sup>28</sup> *But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—* <sup>29</sup> *I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience?* <sup>30</sup> *If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?*

<sup>31</sup> *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* <sup>32</sup> *Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,* <sup>33</sup> *just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.” (ESV)*

Let's pray.

Father God, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word today. We just want to be sensitive to Your Holy Spirit as You speak to us. As you declare truth to

us, we want to hear all that You have to say, so speak to us. We ask in Jesus name, amen. Amen.

We have some reminders. Paul, you probably noticed if you've been following along this study of 1 Corinthians, particularly as I said, back in chapter 8. Paul is giving a summary of things that he's been saying and the way he does it is by laying out principles.

I don't know if some of you people are principle type people where you enjoy living by guiding principles, things that are true, that you can apply to things. And Paul's doing that here as he ends this chapter. And he begins actually by stating one of the principles that they had been living by. But before we take a look at that, let me remind you what a principle is. Okay.

Here's the definition of the word, principle.

**principle (prin-ci-ple) •noun•**

A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.

It's a fundamental truth or a proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.

And what that means is, once you know a principle, you can apply it. You don't have to necessarily know all the ways that it's going to apply, but later on you find, oh, wow, this applies to that principle. This can be, governed by that sort of thing.

A principle is a guiding truth and many people live by principles actually, which isn't a bad thing. But there are a lot of principles that are really weird in the world. The world lives by principles too. You might not be surprised to hear. And some of them are not only not found in the Bible, they are out now, contrary to things that the Bible teaches.

I googled, principles for living, and I came up with this little gem. Check this out.

**“To love others and the world, you’ve got to start by loving yourself.”  
—the spirit of this world**

To love others and the world, you've got to start by loving yourself.

I credited that to the spirit of this world, cause you hear that. I found it was easy to find on the internet just by saying, principles for living. And you can just hear it in just about every Disney movie that you watch too, because it's all there, right?

That's a dumb one, but it's still a very popular principle, even though it runs contrary to the Word of God. In fact, you're going to find that principle that we just put up is really the opposite of what Paul is going to be saying in the last part of 1 Corinthians, chapter 10. He's going to be saying the opposite of that.

The world says, you got to love yourself first before you can love others. Paul says, get busy loving others. I don't care how you feel about yourself or what's going on in your own heart, get busy walking in obedience to loving other people, and showing that love to other people. And the rest falls in place.

Let's see how he begins to speak of these things. He begins by repeating, as I said, a principle that had been expressed earlier. Look in verse 23. And the principle is the first part, "*All things are lawful,*"

Now that's the principle that the Corinthians liked to recite and they liked to live by. The problem is, it's not complete, so Paul adds to it.

And he says, "*...but not all things are helpful.*" And then he quotes their principle, but then adds to it again. "*All things are lawful,*" (that's what they like to say, but he adds) *but not all things build up.*"

You see, some principles may sound fine insofar as they go, but sometimes, many times, they don't go far enough. And the Corinthians were fond of saying, all things are lawful for me, but they didn't always have the right heart attitude when it came to living out things that were lawful for them, and it ended up that their love and appreciation for their Christian liberty, gave too much room for selfishness. And that's what Paul's been saying over the course of the last few chapters.

That's fine to say all things are lawful for me, but if you're saying it with a self-centered attitude, you're not going to love your brother and sister in Christ. And you're not going to care about the lost. You're not going to care about bringing them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

You see, some of these principles that sound good on the outside can be really self-directed and self-centered. And being selfish is frankly one of the toughest

things for us to admit to. I don't particularly enjoy admitting that I'm a selfish man, but it is a reality in my life. And I have learned it.

God has shown me that and there's not a shadow of a doubt in my mind that I am a selfish man, that I think very selfishly. I'm very self-centered in my thoughts and I'll, I don't know if I'll shock you or not, but I don't think I'm alone. I think there's a few folks that join me in that respect, but that's why he goes on to say for us here in verse 24 in your Bible.

*“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.”* And what he's saying by that is, just because something is good for me, which I'm very aware of what's good for me, doesn't mean it's necessarily good for others. And he's basically saying and reminding us here that we need to consider what is good for others. Even above and beyond what's good for ourselves.

And then in verse 25, Paul makes another summary statement about something he's been covering here for the last few chapters, and that's this issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols. You're probably getting tired of hearing about it but here's the summary.

*“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience.”* William Barclay says, don't ask fussy questions. And by the way, this ran contrary to the Jewish way of shopping, and thinking, and talking about before they would buy things. They would ask all kinds of penetrating questions about it because they were very legalistic in their approach to things, and my wife tells me it's just flat out rude.

We've been, I didn't know that, but we would go to dinner places and I would just ask, we'd be... I said, hey, this is good, what's in this? And we get home and she say, don't ever ask what's in something, that's not nice. Oh, okay. She'd tell me not to be so fussy about things. And you know what, she's right. And most of the time I don't want to know what's in things.

But Paul saying, don't worry about where it came from when you go to the meat market. Why? And then he recites another principle right from God's Word. Look at verse 26, *“For ‘the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.’”* Not only is this a principle, this is actual quotation from Psalm chapter 24. David wrote this, for *“The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,”* (Psalm 24:1) What basically does that mean? It means, it all belongs to God. Anyway, He created it. You'll remember in Genesis, He declared it, good, right? And so don't get so whacked out about it.

There's this interesting sort of a tendency that we human beings have, to try to find some kind of evil connotation in things, or animals, or something from the world. And I get this. I do, I get it. I know that some symbols and even some animals have been used very negatively in demonic and very dark ways. I get that. To the point where, you know if somebody uses a goat head, and I'm not talking about those little seeds you step on and make you cry, talking about a real goat head with the... People look at a goat head that, and it has become a symbol of some demonic, I get that. I know that.

That doesn't mean that goats are bad or that even a goat head, if you will, a skull of a goat is like, ooh, I'm not going to have one of those things around sort of a thing. We kind of get all weirded out and we forget that, *"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,"* Or as the NIV says, *"and everything in it,"* right? Something to remember and that's a good principle.

Paul goes on saying in verse 27, *"If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, (just, he says, just) eat whatever is set before you without (asking him what's in it, no, without) raising any question on the ground of conscience."* In other words, when you're eating with unbelievers, don't even talk about what exactly is being eaten, or where the meat came from, or whatever. Just don't even bring it up because it's not important.

But then he goes on to say this in verse 28. *"But if someone says to you,..."* And by the way, the inference here is that this someone is a believer who has a weak conscience, okay. Let's assume that for a moment, if someone says to you, *"This has been offered in sacrifice,"* (he says) *then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—<sup>9</sup> I do not mean your conscience, but his."*

He says, if someone at the gathering announces to you. You're with a group of unbelievers, and maybe some believers sprinkled in, and one of the believers says to you, this meat was, he was sacrificed to an idol. He's like, okay, they just basically ruined it for you, but that's okay. Just don't eat it. Okay. For their sake.

Now, why does he say that? And why do we infer or believe that he's referring to a believer here with a weak conscience? Who else would care? Right. And unbeliever isn't going to care where the meat came from. They're used to eating meat, sacrifice to idols all the time. It's what they do. Right. The only person that's going to care and make mention of it, is a believer who still thinks that it's wrong to eat meat sacrifice to an idol because they're still carrying some of their pagan remnants of thought and so forth. And they actually honestly believe that eating that meat is going to defile you.

He says, you know what, if their conscience is weak, then don't eat it for the sake of their conscience, and be thinking about them. And then he adds this here at the end of verse 29. He says, *"For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience?"* And what Paul is saying here is, why expose your freedom to condemnation from others? Okay.

It's another reason why not to eat it. You're in public. You're in a public, well, or even if we're in a private setting and you're mixed with believers and unbelievers. And somebody says to you, this meat was sacrificed to an idol, you have the liberty to eat that meat but why would you expose your liberty to someone else's condemnation? That's the question that he's asking here.

And when Christians who do possess knowledge to partake of gray areas or participate in gray areas, we've talked about those a lot through 1 Corinthians 10. When they have the knowledge to do it and they do it in a public manner, they expose their freedom to the condemnation of others who don't consider it right to do that sort of thing. And it just ends up creating drama. And I know some people like drama, but let's not go there. Because we've got enough drama in our lives that we don't need to create it, and frankly, it creates a bad witness in the body of Christ.

Then Paul repeats his earlier question in a different way. Verse 30. He says, *"If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?"* In other words, it's better to deny myself the exercise of my freedom and not allow my freedom to be spoken of as evil by others. Don't let your freedom become the root of malicious talk or something like that.

Now somebody might be thinking to themselves at this point, you know what? I really don't care if somebody doesn't happen to like the choices I make in my life. These things are not unbiblical, they're not wrong, they're not immoral, and they're not illegal, so frankly, I just don't care. I'm just going to live my life the way I live my life. And if somebody's got a problem with it, that's their problem.

I don't know if that sounds like a familiar attitude to you. It might even be yours. It might've been an attitude you heard from someone else. But you see, that's the very kind of attitude that Paul is speaking against in these verses. Because, oops, sorry, he calls it selfishness. That's a selfish attitude. It sounds like a strong attitude on the outside. Hey, I don't care what people think of me. I don't care if they criticize, I don't care if they condemn, they can, that's their problem. It sounds like they're, that person's all put together and we kind of

appreciate that strength of character that says, they're not going to bow or bend to the concerns of others, and that sort of thing.

Paul says it's selfish. It's unloving. It's uncaring, in fact, to basically have that, kind of an attitude. Like it or not, we live within the visual range of other people and more so today than ever. With the popularity of social media, good grief, people, we let people in our homes all the time.

Now, that's not necessarily a bad thing. Depending on how you care for others because you've got Christians peeking into the windows of your home through social media. You have unbelievers peeking into your home, and sometimes even into your innermost thoughts through the course of social media. And the question to ask yourself is, should I be letting them look in the window? Is this something for which I may somehow work up the condemnation of others? And will it allow my freedom to be brought into a place of malicious drama? Which is going to end up just being a really bad Christian witness.

Do you know guys, it's not a good thing when unbelievers see believers bickering online. It's just not a good thing. We're supposed to be loving each other. Love is supposed to begin in the body of Christ and spread out from there. And when we are constantly showing the body of Christ, we don't have love dialed in even in our own family, we're not very convincing when we start talking about the love of Christ because we haven't gotten around to loving each other yet.

And I'm sitting here throwing barbs at my brother or my sister because they've got a picture on Facebook and they're doing something that I don't think is right. And I'm writing right on their wall, I don't think that's proper, and you guys should know better and da, da, da, stuff like this. And oh, merciful heavens and we've probably all done something along those lines. God forgive us. But it just brings up all this drama. I mean, talk about abstaining from things. We're better off not being on Facebook, than engaging in bickering and stuff with fellow Christians and stuff like that. It's just something that we shouldn't be doing.

I want to remind you of something Paul wrote to the Philippians along these same lines here. From Philippians chapter 2, he said,

**Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV)**

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

If that verse alone was the guiding principle of what and how we posted on Facebook, we would change the whole face of how we appear to unbelievers as Christians and followers of Jesus Christ. The reason why Paul is emphasizing these things is because they don't come naturally. And that's, again, one of those challenging reminders, just about as challenging as the indictment that I am a selfish person. Challenging to embrace or to accept that is embracing also the fact that, you know what, treating others with courtesy and thinking about their needs before my own doesn't come naturally. It comes supernaturally.

In other words, it's not a work of my flesh that cares first for others, but it is a work of the Spirit who lives within me. And that work of the Spirit is just longing to be expressed. Christ in me, Christ in you is just longing to be expressed. First for others, loving others, putting them first, but it's not going to come naturally. That's why Paul's reminding us here.

And so he ends here with a couple more principles. First, kind of a summary principle of what he's just been saying. Verse 31, so he says, *"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* Now there's a verse that's worthy of your refrigerator, right? Right on the thing, on the front. You could write that on there.

*"...whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* That's an excellent principle. You can apply it to so many, well, to everything, and that sort of thing.

And what this verse is basically saying is, before you do something, can you actually bow your head just like you do before a meal and thank God for that thing? And then even pray that the Lord would be magnified and exalted by what you're about to do. Can you do that? That's an interesting question, isn't it? And you roll through some different scenarios in your mind. Gee, before I do that, can I really truly pray and ask that this would glorify God? And if not, then perhaps I need to rethink what I'm doing.

And then Paul ends with these comments, verse 32. He says, *"Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,"* In other words, as much as possible, as much as it's within your ability, live your life in such a way that your actions don't give offense to anyone.



Now listen to me, I know because I live in the same world that you do, there are some people who are primed and cocked to be offended. And we know. And we've learned over the years to recognize them when they walk through the door. And you can just tell this person just, you can see this propensity in their lives to just be upset about something. And it's that's some people's address in life, and whatever it is, they're going to find a reason to be upset or to be offended. I get that.

And you know what? There are some people for whom it's just almost impossible to live in a pleasing way. Those really aren't the people Paul is addressing here right now. He's talking about the general populace and he's essentially saying, hey, you know what? Do your best to live your life in such a way that you don't cause offense. The people just... Listen, and when you do be willing to apologize, if you have given offense to someone.

And then this final principle, Paul explains the why, verse 33, “*just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, (and) that (in other words, most of the people) they may be saved.*”

And in this final principle, you hear the heart motive behind it, don't you? Why are you going to live your life? Am I telling you to walk on eggshells? Is that what I'm telling you to do? To walk on eggshells just, and live a miserable life to try to please all the little picky, snooty people that are constantly picking nits in your life ,and making life miserable? No, I'm not telling you to do that, and neither is the apostle Paul.

He's saying, listen, just live your life in such a way that you don't burn bridges for sharing Christ with people. You see, it comes down, it's not so that you'll be popular. It's not so that people will like you, and send you nice Hallmark cards, and wish you a happy birthday on Facebook when it's your birthday That's not why you're doing this thing or so you can have more likes on your posts than other people. That's not why Paul is giving this advice.

It's so that people might be saved so that people might come to Christ. We're trying to live in such a way that we're not burning bridges. We're not ruining the opportunity that God might otherwise give us to share the Lord with people. So be careful about the way you live that you're not going to just blow people out of the water and don't have that attitude, I'm going to live the way I want to live. That person is not going to be effective in the kingdom of God as it relates to just sharing Christ with people.

Can you imagine what it would be like if everything you and I did were done so that people might be saved? I mean, think about that for a minute, everything. Imagine if everything we did, everything we said, it was predicated on the idea that I want this person to be saved, and it literally governed our actions. Well, I'm here to tell you that's the way the apostle Paul lived. It truly governed his actions. It governed his words. It governed his attitudes, his mannerisms, when he was around different kinds of people.

When he was around Jews, he tried very hard not to ever give offense. It's when he was around Gentiles/pagans, he tried very hard not to offend them, not to break that bond of relationship. Question is, do we really even care? I think we need to care just by the way we live.

Sometimes people are concerned that they don't get an opportunity much to witness to people in the workplace or wherever. Gee, I just don't get much of a chance to ever really share my faith with people. Well, have you lived in such a way as to create an environment in your life where people want to hear the gospel from you? Or have you lived in such a way as to be so irritating to them, that they're really not willing to listen because you've never really cared about their lives?

These are some pretty important exhortations that the apostle Paul's is giving us here in the latter part of chapter 10. But let me, if I could just end this morning with one more quick comment about living by principles, because, I didn't even count how many principles Paul gave us here in these verses. Maybe some of you did.

But there's a lot of them, frankly, in the Word of God. A lot of principles that are laid out in the scriptures that give us direction on how to live, and they're good to know. And they're even better to incorporate into our Christian walk. But can I just say something very quickly here as we close out this little talk about principles, guiding principles?

Principles cannot handle every life situation that you come up against, nor were they intended to do that. Principles are meant to guide us. They're like those white and yellow stripes on the roadway. They're not necessarily going to help you get to your destination, but they'll guide you on the way. And that's what principles sort of do. They can't tell you everything. They can't show you everything. And here's the point of what I guess I want to end here this morning with.

Principles are no substitute for a relationship with Jesus Christ. I say that because I have met Christians over the years, who I think lived more by principle than they did by relationship. And again, principles are wonderful things, but can you imagine? I mean, think about other relationships. Can you imagine a married couple that lived their relationship or walked out their relationship solely on the basis of principles?

My wife and I actually don't need to talk about anything because we have principles that guide us and direct us every day. That would be a pretty interesting relationship, wouldn't it? Between a husband and a wife. I think rather shallow is maybe the word to kind of describe it.

What exactly am I talking about here when I say, the principles are great but they're not meant for everything, and there's something even greater. I want to end with a passage that I want to show you from Romans chapter 8, check this out. This is so good. Paul writes this,

**Romans 8:14-16 (ESV)**

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...*

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...*

Now, the reason I wanted to use that passage there is because it speaks of the dynamic of conversation and communication with God that ought to happen between He and we because we are His children. Did you notice that? It talks about by adoption, we are now children again. Can you imagine a relationship between a child and the parent, where they didn't ever really talk or commune, but they lived by principles. Can you imagine what kind of a relationship that would be? I don't really talk to my dad. He's given me those some good guiding principles to live by.

No, Paul says by the Spirit that you've received, "...we cry, "Abba! Father!" Which is a term of endearment, and intimacy, and closeness, and fellowship. Can we put that back up on the screen for a second?

**Romans 8:14-16 (ESV)**

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...*

Did you notice too that it talks about, “*For all who are led by the Spirit...*” Again, it refers to this dynamic relationship where we're not just being led by principles of instruction or knowledge, but we're led by the Spirit in personal intimate relationship, where God's talking to you, and you're talking back to God. And there is a give and take, and there's movement, and there's communication, and there's the dynamic of closeness, and fellowship.

I want to know you. I want to hear from you. I want to experience you in my life. I don't want to just live by rules and principles that are like this guiding sort of a thing that, again, principles are great. Paul gives them here in the latter part of this chapter, and we ought to pay attention to them, and we ought to see where it is that we can appropriate them in our walk with the Lord.

But please, Christians, do not stop there. Do not stop living walking with the Lord just by principle. We must go on to follow this wonderful invitation that we've received from God to be intimate with Him and to share the closeness of real, genuine fellowship and relationship. Listen, you can't find that buried in principles. Principles are great, but there's no touch of intimacy and closeness in a principle.

I loved when my kids were little and I could just scoop them up in my lap and just give them a bear hug. Now I get to do that with my grandkids and it's just, it's so much fun. And it's funny, the grandkids come over now, before they even sit down anywhere else, they jump in our laps and they're getting kind of big for it, a couple of them, Emma's like, 12 and has legs sticking out all over the place and Livvy, the same thing. And they just come and hop into our laps, and they're just, oh they long for that closeness and intimacy.

Now imagine if we, if that never ever happened and I simply said to my grandkids, well, I've got some principles here for you to live by. You go memorize them and we'll be good. And what kind of a relationship would that be, right? Be careful that you're not living by just principle, but you're instead nurturing a very living and growing relationship with God. I was blessed to hear Amy praying during worship this morning about just that we might have and walk in that relationship with Jesus Christ.