

WEAVER STUDY GUIDES

How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians

Study Guide

New Testament Studies

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A lesson-by-lesson companion for reading, discussion, and written responses.

Downloadable classroom edition | 8.5 x 11 inches

Name / group

Date

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Using this guide

Read the corresponding chapter, then work through the themes, arguments, and Scripture references.

Write your responses before discussing the questions with others. Use the application pages to identify a practical next step.

The study material is retained from the existing lecture study guides. Added writing prompts provide space for your own response.

Print at Actual Size / 100% on US Letter paper. Single-sided and double-sided printing are both suitable. Lessons begin on the next available page; no blank pages are inserted.

Reading assignments refer to the September 30, 2026 edition of the companion book. Online lecture links and QR codes are collected at the end.

LESSON 1

How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians

Part One of Five

March 08, 2012

Read Chapter 1 in the companion book, pages 5-21.

Major Themes

Doctrine as the Basis for Christian Living

Practical Christian living must be grounded in sound biblical doctrine; without it, godly conduct is impossible.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'It is impossible to live biblically, to live holy and godly without understanding doctrine and its applications.'

Varying Degrees of Faith and Maturity

Believers have different levels of faith and understanding, from weak to strong, and conflicts often arise from these differences.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'There are degrees of faith... the problem that drew the Apostle Paul's attention... was a problem that arose because there were some who were strong in faith and some who were weak in faith.'

Receiving Weaker Brethren with Love

Christians are commanded to receive those weak in faith with kindness and fellowship, not for the purpose of arguing or harsh rebuke.

Lecture support: Weaver explains, 'Him that is weak in the faith receive you... we are to receive them as weaker brothers... treat them exactly like they are, like brothers, like fellow believers.'

Avoiding Disputes over Non-Essentials

Believers must not engage in quarrels or arguments over disputable matters; instead, they should patiently teach and build up others.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'We're not to receive the weaker brethren for the purpose of telling them off, straightening them out, and demanding that they grow up.'

Ministering According to Spiritual Maturity

Just as children, young men, and fathers have different needs, believers must be ministered to at their level of spiritual growth.

Lecture support: Weaver illustrates, 'You have to learn to minister to each Christian to wherever he is in his Christian life. If he's a babe, if he's a young man, or if he's a father.'

Key Arguments

Conflicts are inevitable but reducible through Scripture

While conflicts arise because we are sinners, they can be less frequent and complex if we follow biblical principles.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'Conflicts are inevitable simply because we're sinners. However, we need not have them as frequently as we do... if we would simply follow the clear teachings of Scripture.'

Doctrine produces love and a good conscience

Teaching pure doctrine results in unhypocritical faith, a good conscience, and love, which are essential for peaceful relationships.

Lecture support: Weaver explains from 1 Timothy 1:5, 'The result of that commandment of teaching pure doctrine is charity out of a pure heart, out of a good conscience, out of faith unfeigned.'

Weak and strong believers differ over non-essential matters

Conflicts in Romans 14 were not over core doctrines but over differences in understanding and enlightenment on indifferent matters.

Lecture support: Weaver notes, 'These problems and these conflicts did not arise over strong doctrinal issues... rather they arose over differences of understanding and differences of enlightenment.'

Receiving the weak is receiving Christ

To receive a weak brother is to receive Christ and God the Father, making it a serious matter of obedience.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Mark 9:37, 'Whoso shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me. And whoso shall receive me, receiveth not me but him that sent me.'

Argumentative approaches harden rather than help

Harsh denunciation and quarreling over non-moral issues only confirm a person in their doubts and drive them away.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Albert Barnes: 'A harsh and angry denunciation of a man in relation to things not morally wrong... will only tend to confirm him more and more in his doubts.'

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-3

The primary text for the sermon, introducing the command to receive the weak in faith without disputing over doubtful matters.

1 Timothy 1:3-5

Used to show that teaching pure doctrine leads to love, a good conscience, and unhypocritical faith.

Romans 3:19

Quoted to contrast the wicked who do not know the way of peace with believers called to peace.

1 Corinthians 7:15

Cited to affirm that God has called believers to peace.

Romans 4:19-21

Illustrates Abraham's strong faith, showing the contrast between weak and strong faith.

Romans 15:1

Mentioned to show the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.

1 John 2:12-14

Demonstrates three categories of believers: little children, young men, and fathers, indicating varying maturity.

Acts 21:16

References Mnason as an 'old disciple,' illustrating a father in the faith.

John 21:15-17

Jesus' command to feed lambs and sheep shows different levels of spiritual maturity.

Mark 4:28

The growth of grain (blade, ear, full corn) illustrates stages of spiritual maturity.

Philippians 2:29

Paul instructs the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus with gladness, modeling how to receive fellow believers.

Philemon 1:12

Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul himself.

3 John 1:9-10

Diotrephes is condemned for not receiving the brethren and loving preeminence.

Hebrews 6:10

God does not forget the labor of love shown in ministering to the saints.

Romans 15:7

Commands believers to receive one another as Christ received us, to the glory of God.

Matthew 10:41

Receiving a righteous man brings a righteous man's reward, encouraging reception of all believers.

Matthew 18:5

Receiving a little child in Jesus' name is receiving Christ.

Mark 9:37

Receiving a child in Christ's name is receiving Christ and the Father who sent Him.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of 'doubtful disputations' in today's church that can lead to conflicts between believers?

Consider: Weaver emphasizes that conflicts often arise over non-essential matters, not core doctrines.

2. How can we discern whether a disagreement is over a core doctrine or a disputable matter?

Consider: The sermon distinguishes between strong doctrinal issues and differences of understanding.

3. In what practical ways can we 'receive' a weaker brother without engaging in arguments?

Consider: Weaver explains that receiving means taking into one's heart and home with kindness, not for debate.

4. How does understanding the different stages of spiritual maturity (children, young men, fathers) change the way we interact with fellow believers?

Consider: The sermon uses 1 John 2 and other passages to illustrate varying maturity levels.

5. Why is it difficult to be patient with those who are weak in faith, and how can we grow in this area?

Consider: Weaver acknowledges the challenge of starting over with new believers and the need for patience.

6. What does it mean to minister to someone according to their spiritual 'age'? Can you give an example?

Consider: The application section stresses feeding spiritual babes milk, not meat.

Applications

Minister according to spiritual maturity

Believers must learn to receive and minister to each other based on their stage of Christian growth, not expecting babes to act like fathers.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'You have to learn to minister to each Christian to wherever he is in his Christian life.'

Grow in grace through patience with the weak

Learning to receive those who irritate us should challenge us to grow in grace, as it is difficult but necessary work.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'Learning to receive those with whom we are impatient and easily irritated with should be a real challenge and enable us to grow in grace.'

Reject forceful or argumentative methods

We will never reach other saints by forcing, intimidating, or harassing them; such approaches only harden and drive away.

Lecture support: Weaver warns, 'We will never reach other saints by thinking that we can force them, overpower them, intimidate them, and harass them into believing correctly.'

Receive all true believers as Christ received us

We must receive every genuine believer, regardless of their maturity, with the same patience and love Christ showed us.

Lecture support: Weaver applies Romans 15:7: 'Receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God.'

Study notes

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 2

How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians

Part Two of Five

March 08, 2012

Read Chapter 2 in the companion book, pages 23-39.

Major Themes

Sovereignty of God in Illumination

God alone opens minds to understand Scripture; human argument cannot produce spiritual understanding.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'It's God who gives repentance. And if men are going to recover themselves from the snare of the devil, it's only as God gives them repentance.' He also cites Luke 24:31, 45 and Acts 16:14.

Patience and Meekness in Teaching

Strong believers must teach weak believers with gentleness and patience, not striving or arguing.

Lecture support: From 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Weaver emphasizes, 'the servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.'

Unity in Essentials, Liberty in Non-Essentials

Believers should not divide over non-essential doctrines; charity should prevail in all things.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Augustine: 'In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.' He applies this to eschatological debates.

The Danger of Pride and Self-Sufficiency

Believers must remember that all understanding is a gift of grace, preventing pride and promoting humility.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Corinthians 4:7: 'For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?'

The Necessity of Obedience for Growth

God gives more understanding only as we obey what we already know; disobedience leads to loss of truth.

Lecture support: From Mark 4:24-25, Weaver explains, 'with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you... he that hath not from him shall be taken, even that which he hath.'

Key Arguments

Arguing is useless because only God gives understanding.

Since illumination is a sovereign act of God, human argument cannot force spiritual insight; patience and teaching are required.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'What good does it get to get mad at someone for not understanding? Why should I argue? ... I can't open your eyes. I cannot give you understanding. That's the gift of God.'

Strong believers have a duty to bear with the weak.

Romans 15:1 commands the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, following Christ's example of self-sacrifice.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves.'

Teaching must be done with sound doctrine and a right spirit.

Effective teaching requires both sound doctrine (Titus 1:9) and a gentle, patient manner (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'if we're going to convince anyone, if we're going to convict anyone, it must be with sound doctrine... we're to be able to teach, we're to be patient, we're to be meek.'

Conflicts often arise from differing levels of spiritual maturity.

Believers are at different stages (babes, young men, fathers) and have varying understanding, leading to conflicts over indifferent matters.

Lecture support: Weaver notes, 'there are varying degrees of faith... not every believer is on the same level in understanding or in the application of doctrine.'

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-3

The primary text for the series, addressing how to receive weak believers without disputing over doubtful matters.

Titus 3:10

Cited to distinguish dealing with heretics (reject after admonition) from dealing with weak believers.

2 Timothy 2:2

Used to show the obligation to teach faithful men who will teach others, emphasizing teachability.

Romans 15:1-3

Commands the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, following Christ's example.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, applied to patiently teaching weaker brethren.

Titus 1:9

Elders must hold fast sound doctrine to exhort and convince gainsayers.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

The Lord's servant must not strive but be gentle, patient, and meek in teaching, as God grants repentance.

Luke 24:27-31, 45

Jesus opened the disciples' eyes to understand the Scriptures, illustrating sovereign illumination.

Proverbs 2:6

The Lord gives wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.

2 Timothy 2:7

Paul tells Timothy to consider what he says, and the Lord will give understanding.

Mark 4:23-25

The measure you give in hearing and obeying determines the measure of understanding you receive.

Mark 4:33-34

Jesus spoke the word as they were able to hear it, and expounded all things to His disciples privately.

Acts 16:14

The Lord opened Lydia's heart to attend to Paul's words, demonstrating sovereign illumination.

1 Corinthians 4:7

Who makes you differ? What do you have that you did not receive? Used to promote humility.

Study notes

[illegible]

Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of 'indifferent matters' (adiaphora) in today's church that can cause conflicts, and how should we handle them?

Consider: Weaver discusses conflicts over meats and days in Romans 14, and applies the principle to non-essential doctrines like eschatology.

2. How does the doctrine of illumination affect the way we approach teaching and correcting other believers?

Consider: Weaver explains that only God can open eyes to understand truth, so arguing is futile; we must patiently teach and pray.

3. In what ways can strong believers 'bear the infirmities of the weak' without compromising truth or becoming condescending?

Consider: From Romans 15:1-3, Weaver emphasizes sacrificial teaching and edification, following Christ's example.

4. Why is it important to remember that we were once ignorant and reluctant to accept certain truths? How does this shape our patience with others?

Consider: Weaver shares his own experience of resisting truth and later apologizing, urging humility.

5. What does Mark 4:24-25 teach about the relationship between hearing, obeying, and receiving more understanding? How can we apply this?

Consider: Weaver explains that God measures truth back to us according to our measure of meditation and obedience.

Applications

Examine your own teachability.

Believers should cultivate a humble, teachable spirit, willing to listen and learn rather than defend their own views.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'if someone's going to be taught, he has to have a teachable spirit. He has to be willing to listen... and not just defend his position.'

Practice patience and gentleness in teaching.

When correcting or instructing others, do so with meekness and patience, recognizing that God alone grants understanding.

Lecture support: From 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Weaver emphasizes, 'the servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle... patient, in meekness instructing.'

Avoid arguing over non-essential doctrines.

Do not engage in heated disputes over matters like eschatology that do not deny core Christian truths; instead, show charity.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'how can someone be called a heretic if he really believes that Jesus Christ is coming literally, visibly, bodily? He just disagrees... as to when.'

Remember that all understanding is a gift of grace.

Regularly reflect on 1 Corinthians 4:7 to remain humble, acknowledging that everything you know was received from God.

Lecture support: Weaver asks, 'what do you have that was not given to you by the grace and mercy of God?'

Obey the truth you already know to grow in understanding.

Apply what you have learned from Scripture; God will give more light as you faithfully obey what you have.

Lecture support: Weaver warns, 'if you don't put it into practice, you really don't have it... from him shall be taken even that which ye have.'

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 3

Pastor John Weaver - How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians

Part Three of Five

March 08, 2012

Read Chapter 3 in the companion book, pages 41-56.

Major Themes

Christian Liberty and Love

Believers have liberty in Christ, but that liberty must be exercised with love and consideration for weaker brethren to avoid causing them to stumble.

Lecture support: Weaver explains that Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 8 that while an idol is nothing, if eating meat causes a weak brother to stumble, one should abstain.

Distinction Between Strong and Weak Believers

The weak are those still bound by old ceremonial scruples, while the strong understand their freedom in Christ. Both are to be received without judgment.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'The weak were those Christians that were still shackled in their consciences to the old ceremonial observances concerning days and meats.'

Indifferent Matters as Sources of Conflict

Conflicts often arise over things indifferent (meats, days) rather than core doctrine. These issues are still relevant today.

Lecture support: Weaver notes: 'That which caused most conflicts between believers was not doctrine. It was what you and I would call things that are indifferent.'

Evil is Internal, Not External

Sin resides in the heart, not in material things. Therefore, meat offered to idols is not inherently sinful.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'Anytime you locate evil in matter or evil in something material, you've left biblical truth and you've gone into pagan philosophy.'

Seeking the Good of Others Over Self-Pleasure

Christians are called not to please themselves but to edify others, following Christ's example of self-sacrifice.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Romans 15:3: 'For even Christ pleased not himself' and emphasizes bearing one another's burdens.

Pursuing Peace Without Compromising Truth

Believers should strive for peace as much as possible, but not at the expense of principle or righteousness.

Lecture support: Weaver clarifies: 'Paul is not saying peace at any price. He is not saying peace at the sacrifice of principle.'

Key Arguments

Arguing does not produce faith

It is impossible to argue someone into a position of faith because only God can open understanding.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'It is absolutely impossible to argue someone into a position of faith... Someone who does not understand truth is not going to be helped by condemnation.'

Meat offered to idols is not inherently sinful

Paul clearly teaches that an idol is nothing and meat is not defiled, but the conscience of the weak may be defiled if they eat against their conviction.

Lecture support: Weaver reads 1 Corinthians 8:4-7 and explains: 'Paul states undeniably that there is nothing wrong with meat that has been offered unto an idol.'

Liberty must be limited by love

Even though all things are lawful, not all things are expedient or edify. Believers must consider the impact of their actions on others.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Corinthians 10:23-24: 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient... Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.'

The kingdom of God is internal, not external

Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit are the essence of the kingdom, not external observances like food and drink.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Romans 14:17-18: 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

Believers will give account to God

Every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account of their actions, which should motivate careful conduct.

Lecture support: Weaver reads Romans 14:10-12: 'So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.'

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-3

Introduction to the passage about receiving the weak in faith without disputations.

Numbers 25:1-3, 9

Israelites ate meat sacrificed to idols and were judged, showing why some believers were cautious.

Exodus 34:14-16

Warning against eating sacrifices to idols because it leads to idolatry.

Daniel 1:8-16

Daniel purposed not to defile himself with the king's meat, likely offered to idols.

Acts 15:19-20

The Jerusalem Council advised abstaining from pollutions of idols, i.e., meat offered to idols.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Paul's teaching on meat offered to idols: knowledge puffs up, love edifies; an idol is nothing, but liberty must not cause a weak brother to stumble.

1 Corinthians 10:25

Whatever is sold in the shambles (meat market) may be eaten without questions of conscience.

Romans 14:14

Nothing is unclean in itself; it is unclean to the one who considers it unclean.

Matthew 15:15-20

Jesus teaches that what comes out of the heart defiles a man, not what goes into the mouth.

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Romans 14:7

None of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself.

Romans 15:2-3

Let us not please ourselves but our neighbor for good to edification; Christ pleased not himself.

1 Corinthians 10:20-33

Sacrifices to idols are to devils; all things are lawful but not expedient; eat whatever is sold in the shambles; if someone points out it is offered to idols, abstain for conscience sake; do all to the glory of God.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Romans 14:17-18

The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Romans 14:10-12

We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account of ourselves to God.

Romans 14:19

Follow after things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another.

Romans 12:18

If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. What are some modern-day 'indifferent matters' that can cause conflicts between Christians, similar to the meat and days issues in Romans 14?

Consider: Weaver notes that the same types of conflicts over indifferent matters still occur today.

2. How can we discern when to exercise our Christian liberty and when to limit it for the sake of a weaker brother?

Consider: The message emphasizes balancing liberty with love and consideration for others.

3. Why is it important to understand that evil resides in the heart and not in material things? How does this affect our view of 'worldly' things?

Consider: Weaver argues that sin is internal, not in matter, which has implications for how we judge external practices.

- 4.** In what ways do we struggle with pleasing ourselves rather than seeking the good of others?
What practical steps can we take to follow Christ's example?

Consider: Weaver emphasizes Romans 15:2-3 and the call to not please ourselves.

- 5.** How does the reality of the judgment seat of Christ influence our daily interactions and conflicts with other believers?

Consider: Weaver points to Romans 14:10-12 as a motivation for careful conduct.

Applications

Learn not to please ourselves

Christians must forego personal pleasures and preferences to serve and edify others, following Christ's example.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'If we're going to learn to avoid conflicts, we must learn not to please ourselves.'

Abstaining from pleasures is not harmful

Giving up temporary pleasures for the sake of others is not a loss; God rewards such sacrifices.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'Abstaining from a few pleasures is not going to hurt us... God always rewards me and gives me greater pleasure at something else.'

Focus on internal righteousness, not external observances

The kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, not about external rules like food and drink.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Romans 14:17-18 and emphasizes pleasing God over personal pleasure.

Live with accountability to God

Remembering that we will give account to God should shape our attitudes and actions toward others.

Lecture support: Weaver reads Romans 14:10-12 and applies it to our conduct.

Pursue peace and edification

Believers should actively seek peace and build up one another, avoiding unnecessary conflicts.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Romans 14:19 and Romans 12:18, emphasizing peace without compromising truth.

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 4

How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians

Part Four of Five

March 08, 2012

Read Chapter 4 in the companion book, pages 57-72.

Major Themes

Biblical Definition of Offense

Offense in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 means encouraging a weak brother to do something without having the same knowledge, not merely upsetting someone.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'Biblical offense only occurs when you encourage a weak brother to exercise the same liberty that you are exercising without having your knowledge and your understanding.'

Christian Liberty and Things Indifferent

Conflicts arise over matters not inherently sinful (meats, days), where believers have liberty but must consider the weak.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'Things that are indifferent are things which are not condemned in the Word of God... Eating meat is not sinful.'

Weak vs. Strong Believers

Only weak believers are offended in the biblical sense; they lack knowledge and have weak consciences, while the strong have knowledge and liberty.

Lecture support: Weaver notes: 'It is the weak Christians that are offended and that stumble... their conscience being weak is defiled.'

Ignorance Leads to Stumbling

Stumbling and offense result from ignorance - lack of knowledge about God and His Word.

Lecture support: Weaver explains: 'Those who are weak, offended, and stumble do so because of ignorance... My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.'

Conscience Bound to God's Word

Believers' consciences are free from human traditions and bound only to Scripture; acting against conscience without retraining it is sin.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'The only thing that can bind our consciences is the Word of God... whatsoever is not of faith is sin.'

Misuse of 'Offense' in Modern Language

People often use 'offense' to mean being upset or not liking something, which is a perversion of the biblical term.

Lecture support: Weaver gives examples: 'Don't say that, it offends me' means 'Shut up, I don't want to hear it.'

Responsibility of the Strong to Teach the Weak

Strong believers must patiently instruct the weak rather than condemn them, helping them grow in knowledge.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'It is our responsibility to patiently consider and educate and teach the weaker brethren. We're not to despise them, belittle them, or browbeat them.'

Key Arguments

Offense is not about hurt feelings

Biblical offense does not mean making someone mad or upset; it specifically involves causing a weak brother to stumble by emboldening him to act without knowledge.

Lecture support: Weaver argues: 'The word offend does not mean to make mad or to make angry or to upset... you can only offend a weaker brother, and that is by emboldening him or encouraging him to do that which you're doing without having your knowledge.'

Only the weak can be offended biblically

The strong are not offended in the biblical sense; only those with weak consciences and lack of knowledge stumble.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'It is the weak Christians that are offended and that stumble. It's not the strong, it's the weak.'

Liberty must be exercised with care for the weak

Christian liberty in indifferent matters is real, but it must not become a stumbling block to those with weaker consciences.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Corinthians 8:9: 'But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.'

Ignorance is the root of stumbling

The weak stumble because they lack knowledge; the strong have knowledge that an idol is nothing, but the weak do not.

Lecture support: Weaver explains: 'If someone stumbles and falls and is offended, it is because of ignorance... My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.'

Conscience must be retrained by Scripture

It is not safe to go against conscience unless one is retraining it according to God's Word; otherwise, acting without faith is sin.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'It's neither safe nor right to go against your conscience unless you are re-instructing and retraining your conscience in a more biblical understanding.'

Modern 'offense' language is a perversion

Common phrases like 'I'm offended' often mean 'I don't like it' or 'please me,' not the biblical concept of causing a brother to stumble.

Lecture support: Weaver translates: 'Be careful not to offend him' means 'Don't make him mad or he might cuss you out.'

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-4

Weaver reads this passage to introduce the topic of receiving weak believers without disputing over doubtful things.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Weaver reads the entire chapter to show the conflict over meat offered to idols and the principle of not causing a weak brother to stumble.

1 John 2:12-14

Weaver references John's distinction between little children, young men, and fathers to illustrate degrees of faith.

Acts 16:14

Weaver cites the Lord opening Lydia's heart to show that only God gives understanding.

1 Corinthians 10:25

Weaver mentions the shambles (meat market) to explain where meat offered to idols was sold.

1 Corinthians 8:9

Weaver quotes this verse to show that Christian liberty can become a stumbling block to the weak.

John 1:11-12

Weaver references the word 'power' or 'right' to explain the meaning of 'liberty' in 1 Corinthians 8:9.

1 John 3:4

Weaver quotes this to define sin as transgression of the law, distinguishing it from things indifferent.

Galatians 5:1

Weaver quotes this to emphasize standing fast in Christian liberty and not being entangled in bondage.

Galatians 5:13

Weaver quotes this to show that liberty should not be used for the flesh but to serve one another in love.

1 Corinthians 8:7

Weaver reads this to show that not all have knowledge and that the weak conscience is defiled.

Proverbs 24:10

Weaver quotes this to illustrate that fainting in adversity is a sign of small strength, linking to weak faith.

Romans 14:5

Weaver reads this to show that each person must be fully persuaded in his own mind regarding days.

Romans 14:22-23

Weaver reads this to emphasize that whatever is not of faith is sin, and one must not condemn himself in what he allows.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6

Weaver reads this to show that the strong know an idol is nothing and there is one God.

Romans 11:36

Weaver quotes this to affirm that all things are of, through, and to God.

Hosea 4:6

Weaver quotes this to show that God's people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Luke 17:1-2

Weaver reads this to address the common misinterpretation of 'offense' as merely upsetting someone.

Isaiah 8:13-14

Weaver reads this to show that Christ is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to the disobedient.

Romans 9:33

Weaver quotes this to show that God laid a stumbling stone in Zion.

Study notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the biblical definition of 'offense' differ from the way we commonly use the word today?

Consider: Weaver spends significant time contrasting the biblical concept with modern usage, such as 'I'm offended' meaning 'I don't like it.'

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2. What are some examples of 'things indifferent' in our contemporary church context, and how can we avoid causing a weaker brother to stumble over them?

Consider: Weaver explains that indifferent matters are not sinful in themselves but can become stumbling blocks, using meat and days as examples.

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3. Why is it important to recognize that only the weak are offended in the biblical sense, and how should that affect our interactions with fellow believers?

Consider: Weaver emphasizes that the strong are not offended; this understanding should lead to patience and teaching rather than condemnation.

4. How can we retrain our consciences according to Scripture without violating them in the process?

Consider: Weaver discusses the difficulty of going against lifelong training and the need to instruct one's conscience with God's Word.

5. In what ways might we be guilty of 'condemning' the weak rather than 'teaching' them, and how can we change that tendency?

Consider: Weaver notes that the strong tend to condemn the ignorant, but the biblical response is patient instruction.

6. How does the truth that 'all things are yours' (1 Corinthians 3:21-23) change the way we enjoy God's creation without abusing it?

Consider: Weaver applies the doctrine of Christian liberty to the enjoyment of creation, urging believers to use the world without abusing it.

Applications

Examine your use of 'offense' language

Believers should stop using 'offense' to mean mere dislike or anger and instead understand it biblically as causing a weak brother to stumble.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We have perverted the biblical doctrine of offense and we've made it to mean something entirely different from what the Scripture teaches.'

Patiently teach the weak rather than condemn them

Strong believers must resist the fleshly tendency to condemn those with less knowledge and instead instruct them with patience.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'It is our responsibility to patiently consider and educate and teach the weaker brethren. We're not to despise them, belittle them, or browbeat them.'

Enjoy God's creation without abusing it

Because all things are given by God for our enjoyment, believers should learn to use the world properly, not ascetically or licentiously.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'Those who are strong in the faith understand how to use God's creation without abusing it.'

Bind your conscience only to Scripture

Believers must reject man-made traditions and rules that bind the conscience, standing fast in the liberty of Christ.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'The only thing that can bind our consciences is the Word of God.'

Do not encourage weak believers to act without knowledge

Before exercising a liberty in front of a weaker brother, consider whether it might embolden him to act against his conscience.

Lecture support: Weaver defines offense as 'encouraging him to do what you're doing without having your knowledge.'

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 5

How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians

Part Five of Five

March 08, 2012

Read Chapter 5 in the companion book, pages 73-90.

Major Themes

Biblical Definition of Offense

Offense is not making someone mad or hurting feelings; it is emboldening a weaker brother to act against his conscience without having the knowledge of the stronger brother.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'You can only biblically offend a weak brother and you offend him by encouraging him, by emboldening him to do what you're doing without having your knowledge and your understanding.'

Christian Liberty and Its Limits

Believers have liberty in Christ, but they may forego exercising that liberty for the furtherance of the gospel, personal holiness, or the sake of weaker brethren.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'Although we may never forsake the principle of liberty, that does not mean that at times we cannot forego the exercise of that liberty.'

Sin Against Christ Through Offending a Brother

When a strong brother offends a weak brother, he sins against Christ because he disobeys Christ's command to love, harms one united to Christ, and usurps Christ's lordship over conscience.

Lecture support: Weaver explains: 'We sin against Christ because He has commanded us to love one another... weak brethren are just as intimately united to Jesus Christ as are the stronger brethren... Jesus Christ is Lord of the conscience, not man.'

Theology of Rebuke vs. Misunderstood Offense

Misunderstanding offense as merely upsetting someone has caused the church to lose the biblical practice of warning, admonishing, and exhorting one another.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'Because of a misunderstanding of the biblical doctrine of offense, we have lost the theology of rebuke.'

Conscience Bound to God's Word, Not Traditions

Christian liberty frees believers from man-made traditions; the conscience is bound only to Scripture, not to the dictates of men.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'My conscience is bound to the Word of God... Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.'

Key Arguments

Offense Requires Action Against Conscience

An offense only occurs when the weak brother actually acts against his conscience; mere disagreement or displeasure does not constitute biblical offense.

Lecture support: Weaver argues: 'If the weak brother does not act or is emboldened to act, he has not stumbled and no offense has been committed.'

Offending a Weak Brother Is Sin

Scripture explicitly states that wounding a weak brother's conscience is a sin against the brother and against Christ.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Corinthians 8:12: 'But when ye sin so against the weak brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.'

Liberty Must Not Be Used to Destroy

The strong must not use their liberty in a way that destroys the work of God in a weaker brother's life; love must govern the exercise of liberty.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Romans 14:15,20: 'Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died... For meat destroy not the work of God.'

Foregoing Liberty Is Not Forsaking the Principle

Believers may temporarily refrain from exercising a liberty without denying the principle of liberty itself, for the sake of the gospel, holiness, or weaker brethren.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'We may never, ever forsake that principle. However, although we may never forsake the principle of Christian liberty, that does not mean that at times we cannot forego the exercise of that liberty.'

Rebuke Is Not Offense

Biblical warning, admonition, and rebuke may upset someone but do not constitute offense because offense requires emboldening to act without knowledge.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'If you rebuke someone, if you warn someone, if you reprove someone, if you admonish someone, sooner or later, someone is going to get upset... But have you offended them? No.'

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-3

Introduction to the weak and strong in faith; receiving the weak without disputations.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

The entire chapter is read and expounded as the primary text on offense and Christian liberty regarding meats offered to idols.

Galatians 5:11

The offense of the cross; persecution would cease if Paul preached circumcision.

1 Corinthians 1:18-23

The preaching of the cross is foolishness to the perishing; Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks.

1 Peter 2:8

Christ is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who are disobedient.

1 John 3:4

Sin is the transgression of the law; used to distinguish sinful acts from indifferent things.

1 Corinthians 8:7,9,11,12

Emphasizing that it is the weak who stumble and are offended; their conscience is weak.

1 Corinthians 8:4-7

The strong know an idol is nothing; the weak are ignorant of this knowledge.

1 Corinthians 8:10

The weak brother is emboldened to eat when he sees the strong brother eating in the idol's temple.

1 Corinthians 8:12

Sin against the weak brethren wounds their weak conscience and is sin against Christ.

Psalms 51:4

David's confession that his sin was primarily against God, though it affected others.

Galatians 6:10

Do good to all men, especially to the household of faith.

Matthew 25:40

What is done to the least of Christ's brethren is done to Him.

Romans 14:13-17

Do not put a stumbling block in a brother's way; the kingdom is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace, and joy.

Galatians 5:13-14

Called to liberty; use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh but by love serve one another.

1 Corinthians 9:3-5

Paul had the right to marry but forewent it for the gospel's sake.

1 Corinthians 7:32-33

The unmarried care for the things of the Lord; the married care for the things of the world.

Psalms 101:3

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; used to support personal holiness over liberty.

Hebrews 12:14

Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Acts 20:31

Paul warned everyone night and day with tears; example of biblical warning.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the biblical definition of offense differ from the common understanding of offending someone?

Consider: Weaver contrasts the biblical meaning (emboldening a weak brother to act against conscience) with the modern idea of upsetting someone.

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2. Why is it a sin against Christ to offend a weaker brother?

Consider: Weaver gives three reasons: disobedience to Christ's command to love, harming one united to Christ, and usurping Christ's lordship over conscience.

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3. What is the difference between forsaking the principle of Christian liberty and foregoing its exercise?

Consider: Weaver explains that we must never deny the principle of liberty, but we may choose not to exercise it in certain situations.

4. In what three areas may a believer legitimately forego the exercise of Christian liberty?

Consider: Weaver lists the furtherance of the gospel, personal holiness, and consideration of weaker brethren.

5. How has the misunderstanding of offense affected the practice of biblical rebuke and admonition in the church?

Consider: Weaver argues that equating offense with upsetting someone has led to the loss of the theology of rebuke.

6. How can we balance exercising our liberty in Christ with not causing a weaker brother to stumble?

Consider: Weaver emphasizes using wisdom, compassion, and consideration, and being willing to forego liberty for the sake of others.

Applications

Examine Your Definition of Offense

Believers should evaluate whether they have adopted the world's definition of offense (making someone mad) rather than the biblical one (emboldening a weak brother to sin against conscience).

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'We have taken the biblical doctrine of offense and perverted it and we've turned it around to make it mean to make somebody mad or to upset someone or to hurt their feelings when it has absolutely nothing to do with that.'

Prioritize Love Over Liberty

When exercising Christian liberty, believers must consider the impact on weaker brethren and be willing to limit their freedom out of love, not insisting on their own rights.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We must at all times consider the weaker brethren. But, considering the weaker brethren is not surrendering to them, nor pandering to them in their weakness.'

Restore Biblical Rebuke and Admonition

The church must recover the practice of warning, admonishing, and exhorting one another without fear of being accused of offense, since biblical rebuke is not the same as causing to stumble.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'Because of a misunderstanding of the biblical doctrine of offense, we have lost the theology of rebuke.'

Bind Conscience to Scripture Alone

Believers should refuse to let their conscience be bound by man-made traditions or the opinions of others, standing fast in the liberty of Christ while submitting only to God's Word.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'My conscience is bound to the Word of God... Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.'

Exercise Liberty with Wisdom and Compassion

Strong believers should not be 'spiritual bulls in a china shop' but should use wisdom, compassion, and consideration when exercising their liberties around others.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'When we are exercising our Christian liberties, under Christ, we must always consider weaker brethren, use wisdom, compassion, and consideration.'

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

Online Lecture Resources

Scan a code or select the lecture link in the PDF. The original lecture identifiers and destinations are preserved.

Lesson 1: How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians - Part One of Five

Lecture JW01294

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Lesson 2: How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians - Part Two of Five

Lecture JW01295

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Lesson 3: Pastor John Weaver - How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians - Part Three of Five

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Lesson 4: How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians - Part Four of Five

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Lesson 5: How to Avoid Conflicts Between Christians - Part Five of Five

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Source information

Study material: existing Major Themes, Key Arguments, Scripture References, Discussion Questions, and Applications from the corresponding Weaver Bible College lecture records. Original lecture titles and provenance are retained in those source records.

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