

WEAVER STUDY GUIDES

How to Avoid Conflicts

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 1

April 03, 2011

Read Chapter 1 in the companion book, pages 5-20.

Major Themes

Doctrine as the Basis for Christian Living

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

Lecture support: The Apostle Paul lays out doctrine first (Romans 1-11) and then practical application (Romans 12-16). 1 Timothy 1:3-5 shows that pure doctrine produces love, a good conscience, and unhypocritical faith.

Varying Degrees of Faith and Maturity

Believers have different levels of faith and understanding, from weak to strong, and should be treated accordingly.

Lecture support: Romans 14:1-2 mentions the weak and strong. 1 John 2:12-14 divides believers into children, young men, and fathers. John 21:15-17 and Mark 4:28 illustrate different stages of growth.

Receiving Weaker Brethren with Love

Christians are commanded to receive those weak in faith with kindness and fellowship, not for arguments.

Lecture support: Romans 14:1 says 'receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.' The Greek word *proslambano* implies taking to oneself with affection. Romans 15:7 commands receiving as Christ received us.

Patience in Ministering to the Immature

Spiritual growth takes time; believers must patiently teach and not demand instant maturity.

Lecture support: Illustrations of feeding lambs vs. sheep, plant growth stages, and the teacher's experience with fourth graders show that understanding develops gradually.

Avoiding Arguments over Disputable Matters

Conflicts often arise over non-essential issues; believers should not quarrel but build each other up.

Lecture support: Romans 14:1 warns against 'doubtful disputations.' Albert Barnes is quoted: harsh denunciation confirms doubts; kind reception overcomes scruples.

Key Arguments

Doctrine Precedes Practice

Paul structures Romans to teach that right living flows from right doctrine; ignorance of doctrine leads to ungodly conduct.

Lecture support: Romans is divided into doctrinal (ch.1-11) and practical (ch.12-16) sections. 1 Timothy 1:3-5 shows the end of the commandment to teach pure doctrine is love from a pure heart.

Faith Has Degrees

Saving faith exists in varying strengths; believers are at different stages of maturity, which must be recognized to avoid conflict.

Lecture support: Romans 14:1 mentions 'weak in the faith.' Romans 4:19-21 describes Abraham as 'strong in faith.' 1 John 2:12-14 categorizes believers as children, young men, and fathers.

Receive the Weak as Brothers

The command to 'receive' means to welcome weaker believers into fellowship with love, not to reject or despise them.

Lecture support: Romans 14:1 says 'receive ye.' The Greek *proslambano* means to take to oneself with kindness. Diotrephes in 3 John 1:9-10 is condemned for not receiving the brethren.

Receiving Reflects Christ's Reception of Us

We are to receive others as Christ received us - patiently, despite our ignorance and sin - for God's glory.

Lecture support: Romans 15:7: 'receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.' Hebrews 6:10 shows God remembers our ministry to the saints.

Reception Is Not for Arguments

We must not receive weaker brethren to quarrel or force them to mature; instead, we are to teach patiently and build them up.

Lecture support: Romans 14:1 says 'not to doubtful disputations.' The illustration of demanding a two-year-old to grow up shows the futility of forcing maturity.

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-3

The primary text for the sermon, introducing the weak and strong in faith and the command to receive without disputing.

1 Timothy 1:3-5

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

Romans 3:19

Quoted to contrast the wicked who do not know the way of peace with God's call to peace.

1 Corinthians 7:15

Cited to affirm that God has called us to peace.

Romans 4:19-21

Demonstrates Abraham's strong faith, contrasting with weak faith.

Romans 15:1

Mentions the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, reinforcing the distinction.

1 John 2:12-14

Shows three categories of believers: little children, young men, and fathers, illustrating varying maturity.

Acts 21:16

References Mnason, an old disciple, as an example of a father in the faith.

John 21:15-17

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

Mark 4:28

The parable of the growing seed shows stages of growth: blade, ear, full corn.

Philippians 2:29

Paul instructs the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus with gladness, illustrating how to receive notable 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, showing the sin of refusing fellowship.

Hebrews 6:10

God remembers the work of ministering to the saints, encouraging reception of weaker believers.

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, applied to receiving weak believers.

Mark 9:37

Receiving a child in Jesus' name is receiving Christ and the Father, emphasizing the importance of receiving the weak.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. How does the structure of Romans (doctrine first, then practice) challenge the way we approach Christian living?

Consider: The sermon emphasizes that practical living must be based on doctrine (Romans 1-11 before 12-16).

2. In what ways do we fail to recognize varying degrees of faith among believers, and how does that lead to conflict?

Consider: The sermon explains that believers are at different stages (children, young men, fathers) and we often expect uniformity.

3. What does it practically mean to 'receive' a weaker brother or sister without 'doubtful disputations'?

Consider: The command in Romans 14:1 is to welcome with love, not to argue or force maturity.

4. How can we cultivate patience when ministering to those who are spiritually immature or irritating?

Consider: The sermon uses illustrations of lambs, plants, and teaching fourth graders to show the need for patience.

5. Why is it difficult to receive those who are different from us culturally, emotionally, or educationally, and how can we overcome that?

Consider: The sermon notes that differences in background can create conflict, but we must still receive one another.

6. How does remembering that Christ received us in our ignorance and sin change our attitude toward weaker believers?

Consider: Romans 15:7 calls us to receive as Christ received us, which should humble us.

Applications

Minister According to Spiritual Stage

We must learn to receive and minister to each believer according to their level of maturity, just as we feed a baby milk, not steak.

Lecture support: The sermon applies the categories of children, young men, and fathers to how we teach and care for others, using the analogy of feeding a six-month-old.

Grow in Grace Through Patience

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

Lecture support: The preacher shares his experience of teaching theology for hours without immediate fruit, and the fourth-grade teaching story illustrates the need for patience.

Avoid Force and Intimidation

We will never reach other saints by forcing, overpowering, or harassing them into correct belief; such methods harden rather than help.

Lecture support: The sermon states that trying to force someone to believe something only provokes resistance, and we must not quarrel or bicker.

Study notes

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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 2

April 10, 2011

Read Chapter 2 in the companion book, pages 21-37.

Major Themes

Practical Christian Living Flows from Sound Doctrine

Christian conduct is built upon doctrinal understanding; a lack of biblical teaching leads to unbiblical attitudes and actions.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'practical Christian living is a result of sound doctrinal teaching. You cannot live what you do not know, what you do not understand, and what you do not believe.'

Degrees of Faith and Understanding Among Believers

Believers have varying levels of faith (weak, strong, little, great) and understanding, which inevitably leads to conflicts.

Lecture support: Weaver explains, 'there are degrees of faith. There's a weak faith. There's a strong faith. There's a little faith. There's a great faith.'

The Uselessness of Arguing Over Non-Essentials

Arguing and harassing a weak brother over indifferent matters is futile and does not convince them of error.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'fussing and arguing and harassment will never prevail in trying to convince that weak brother that his position is wrong and absurd.'

The Strong Must Teach and the Weak Must Be Teachable

The strong have a duty to patiently teach, and the weak have a duty to listen and learn, as seen in 2 Timothy 2:2.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'the strong must be willing to teach. And the weak must be willing to be taught.'

Bearing the Infirmities of the Weak

The strong are commanded to carry the errors of the weak, not pleasing themselves but edifying them, following Christ's example.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Romans 15:1, 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.'

Sovereignty of God in Illumination

Only God can open a person's understanding to comprehend Scripture; human effort alone cannot produce spiritual insight.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'If God does not open our eyes, we will never see the truth. We will never understand the simplest doctrine.'

Humility and Patience in Teaching

Because all understanding is a gift from God, teachers must be patient and humble, remembering their own past ignorance and resistance.

Lecture support: Weaver asks, 'If God was gracious and merciful and patient with us and gave us His gift of understanding, everything we have is His gift. Can we not be merciful and gracious and patient with others?'

Key Arguments

Arguing is useless because only God grants repentance and understanding.

Since God alone gives repentance and opens eyes, arguing cannot force someone to see truth; patient teaching is required.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'Who is it that gives repentance? It's God. Can we demand that God give someone repentance? ... The answer is no.'

Conflicts arise from despising or judging over indifferent matters.

The strong tend to despise the weak, and the weak tend to judge the strong, leading to disputes over non-essential issues.

Lecture support: Weaver notes, 'the tendency of someone who is strong in the faith is to despise, condemn, and belittle someone who is weak... the tendency of the one who is weak in the faith to judge the strong.'

Teaching must be done with gentleness and patience, not strife.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 commands the Lord's servant to avoid quarreling and instead gently instruct opponents, waiting on God for their repentance.

Lecture support: Weaver reads, '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.'

Understanding is a sovereign gift, not a human achievement.

1 Corinthians 4:7 shows that everything we have is received from God, so we have no grounds for boasting or impatience with others.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes, 'For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?'

God gives truth in proportion to our meditation and obedience.

Mark 4:24-25 teaches that the measure we give in considering God's Word determines the measure of understanding we receive.

Lecture support: Weaver explains, 'to the measure we give in meditating and considering God's truth, to that same measure, God measures truth back to us.'

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-3

The primary text for the series, emphasizing receiving the weak without disputations and not despising or judging over matters like eating.

Titus 3:10

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

2 Timothy 2:2

Used to show that truth is to be committed to faithful people who can teach others, requiring teachability.

Romans 15:1-3

Commands the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak and not please themselves, following Christ's example.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ, applied to patiently teaching weaker brethren.

Titus 1:9

Holding fast the faithful word to exhort and convince gainsayers by sound doctrine.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

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

Luke 24:27-31

Jesus expounded Scriptures to the Emmaus disciples, but their eyes were opened only when God sovereignly acted.

Luke 24:45

Jesus opened the disciples' understanding to comprehend the Scriptures, illustrating divine illumination.

Proverbs 2:6

The Lord gives wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, showing that understanding comes from God alone.

2 Timothy 2:7

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

Mark 4:23-25

Take heed what you hear; with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and more will be given to those who hear.

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 the things spoken by Paul, demonstrating sovereign illumination.

1 Corinthians 4:7

Who makes you differ? What do you have that you did not receive? Used to humble believers and promote patience.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the principle that 'practical Christian living is a result of sound doctrinal teaching' challenge the way we approach conflicts with other believers?

Consider: Weaver emphasizes that doctrine must precede practice; conflicts often stem from doctrinal ignorance.

2. In what ways do we tend to despise or judge fellow believers over non-essential matters, and how can we guard against this?

Consider: Weaver describes the natural tendencies of the strong to despise and the weak to judge.

3. What does it mean to 'bear the infirmities of the weak' in practical terms within a local church?

Consider: Romans 15:1 commands the strong to carry the errors of the weak, not pleasing themselves.

4. How should the truth that only God grants repentance and illumination affect our approach to teaching and correcting others?

Consider: Weaver argues that since God alone opens eyes, we must teach patiently and leave results to Him.

5. Why is it important to remember that we were once ignorant and resistant to truth when we are tempted to be impatient with others?

Consider: Weaver calls for humility by recalling our own past struggles and the grace we received.

6. How can we apply the principle from Mark 4:24-25 that 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you' to our personal study and growth?

Consider: God gives understanding in proportion to our meditation and obedience.

Applications

Avoid arguing and instead teach patiently.

Since arguing is useless, believers should commit to patiently teaching sound doctrine without quarreling, trusting God to open eyes.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.'

Cultivate a teachable spirit.

The weak must be willing to listen, learn, and consider truth rather than defensively clinging to their positions.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'If someone's going to be taught, he has to have a teachable spirit. He has to be willing to listen.'

Bear with the weak by edifying them.

Strong believers should actively seek to educate and enlighten weaker brethren, not just exercise their own liberties.

Lecture support: Weaver explains, 'what we are to do is to please our brethren in edifying, educating, and enlightening them.'

Remember your own dependence on grace.

Humility in teaching comes from recognizing that all understanding is a gift from God, not personal achievement.

Lecture support: Weaver asks, 'what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory?'

Apply truth to receive more truth.

To grow in understanding, believers must meditate on Scripture and obey what they already know, or risk losing even that.

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 he hath.'

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

How to Avoid Conflicts 3

April 17, 2011

Read Chapter 3 in the companion book, pages 39-54.

Major Themes

Christian Liberty and Conscience

Believers have liberty in Christ regarding indifferent matters like food, but must consider the consciences of weaker brothers who may not share the same understanding.

Lecture support: Weaver explains that the strong knew an idol is nothing and meat is not defiled, while the weak thought the meat was contaminated. He cites 1 Corinthians 8:4-7 and Romans 14:14.

The Nature of Sin and Defilement

Sin is located in the human heart, not in material objects. Nothing is unclean of itself; defilement comes from within.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Romans 14:14 ('there is nothing unclean of itself') and Matthew 15:18-20, arguing that evil thoughts and actions from the heart defile a person, not food.

Consideration for the Weaker Brother

Strong believers must limit their liberty when its exercise would cause a weaker brother to stumble or be emboldened to act against his conscience.

Lecture support: Weaver discusses 1 Corinthians 8:9-13, where Paul says if meat causes a brother to stumble, he will never eat meat again, and emphasizes not wounding a weak conscience.

The Uselessness of Arguments and Dependence on God

It is impossible to argue someone into faith or understanding; only God can open eyes. This should produce patience rather than conflict.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'It is absolutely impossible to argue someone into a position of faith' and 'If God does not open one's eyes... he will never ever see truth.'

Peace and Edification as Goals

Believers should pursue peace and mutual edification, avoiding unnecessary conflicts, though not at the expense of principle or righteousness.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Romans 14:19 ('follow after the things which make for peace') and Romans 12:18 ('as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men'), clarifying it is not peace at any price.

Accountability Before God

Every believer will give an account of himself to God at the judgment seat of Christ, which should motivate careful conduct toward others.

Lecture support: Weaver reads Romans 14:10-12, emphasizing that we will all stand before the judgment seat and give an account of our attitudes and actions.

Key Arguments

Conflicts over indifferent matters arise from differences in knowledge and conscience, not from immorality.

The weak in Romans 14 were not immoral but overly scrupulous, abstaining from meat to avoid sin. The strong understood their liberty. Conflicts came from these differing consciences.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'The weak were not immoral people. They were not fornicators... These people were so conscience stricken that many of them abstained from all meats just to make sure that they were not sinning against God.'

An idol is nothing and cannot contaminate meat; therefore, eating such meat is not inherently sinful.

Paul clearly teaches that an idol has no real existence and meat offered to it is not defiled. The strong believer is free to eat it.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Corinthians 8:4 ('we know that an idol is nothing in the world') and Romans 14:14 ('there is nothing unclean of itself').

Christian liberty must be limited by love and concern for the spiritual welfare of others.

Even though something is lawful, it may not be expedient if it causes a weaker brother to stumble. Paul would rather never eat meat than cause a brother to fall.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes 1 Corinthians 8:13 ('if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth') and 1 Corinthians 10:23-24.

Sin is a matter of the heart, not external things; therefore, no food or drink is sinful in itself.

Jesus taught that what enters the mouth does not defile, but what comes from the heart. This principle undergirds the teaching on meats offered to idols.

Lecture support: Weaver reads Matthew 15:17-20 and states, 'Sin does not reside in matter. If you will go back to Matthew chapter 15... those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.'

Believers should not please themselves but seek the good and edification of others.

Christ did not please Himself, and we are called to bear one another's burdens and consider how our actions affect others, even in matters of liberty.

Lecture support: Weaver references Romans 15:2-3 and Galatians 6:2, and says, 'We cannot always please ourselves... Christ pleased not himself.'

The kingdom of God is not about external rules but internal righteousness, peace, and joy.

Paul defines the kingdom not by food and drink but by spiritual realities. This perspective helps believers prioritize what truly matters.

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.'

Scripture References

Romans 14:1-3

Weaver reads these verses at the opening to review the command to receive the weak without disputing over doubtful things.

Numbers 25:1-3, 9

Weaver cites this passage to show why some believers were cautious about eating meat associated with idols, as Israel was judged after eating sacrifices to Baal Peor.

Exodus 34:14-16

Weaver reads this warning against eating sacrifices to other gods, which could lead to idolatry and intermarriage.

Daniel 1:8-16

Weaver references Daniel's refusal to defile himself with the king's meat, which was likely dedicated to idols.

Acts 15:19-20

Weaver reads James's counsel at the Jerusalem Council that Gentile converts should abstain from pollutions of idols, referring to meat offered to idols.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Weaver reads the entire chapter to show Paul's teaching on knowledge, liberty, and the weaker brother regarding meat offered to idols.

1 Corinthians 10:20-33

Weaver reads this passage to highlight principles: not all things are expedient, seek others' good, eat unless told it is idol-offered, and do all to God's glory.

Romans 14:14

Weaver quotes this verse to prove that nothing is unclean of itself; sin does not reside in matter.

Matthew 15:15-20

Weaver reads Jesus' teaching that what comes from the heart defiles a person, not what enters the mouth.

Romans 14:17-18

Weaver quotes these verses to show that the kingdom of God is not about external things like food but righteousness, peace, and joy.

Romans 14:10-12

Weaver reads this passage to remind believers that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

Romans 14:19

Weaver quotes this verse as the final application: pursue peace and mutual edification.

Romans 12:18

Weaver reads this verse to clarify that peace is to be pursued as much as possible, but it is not always achievable with everyone.

Galatians 6:2

Weaver cites this verse to support the call to bear one another's burdens and not please ourselves.

Romans 15:2-3

Weaver references these verses to show that Christ did not please Himself, and we should please our neighbor for edification.

1 Corinthians 10:25

Weaver quotes this verse to show Paul's permission to eat whatever is sold in the shambles without asking questions.

Proverbs 4:23

Weaver alludes to this verse to reinforce that the heart is the source of life's issues, not external things.

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. What does it mean to 'receive the weak in the faith' without 'doubtful disputations,' and how can we practice this today?

Consider: Weaver opens with Romans 14:1 and emphasizes receiving weak believers into fellowship without arguing over disputable matters.

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2. Why is it impossible to argue someone into a position of faith, and how should this affect our interactions with other believers?

Consider: Weaver argues that only God can open eyes to truth, so arguing is useless and we should be patient.

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3. How can we distinguish between matters of doctrine and matters of indifference, and why is this distinction important for church unity?

Consider: Weaver notes that the conflicts in Romans 14 were over indifferent things like food and days, not core doctrine.

- 4.** In what ways might modern believers be 'weak' or 'strong' regarding issues of conscience, and how should the strong treat the weak?

Consider: Weaver describes the weak as those bound by former scruples and the strong as those enjoying liberty, and calls for the strong to limit liberty for the sake of the weak.

- 5.** What does it mean that 'nothing is unclean of itself,' and how does this principle apply to contemporary debates over food, drink, or other practices?

Consider: Weaver teaches from Romans 14:14 and Matthew 15 that sin is in the heart, not in material things, and applies it to issues like alcohol.

- 6.** How can we balance the exercise of Christian liberty with the command not to cause a weaker brother to stumble?

Consider: Weaver discusses 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, where Paul says he would never eat meat if it causes a brother to fall, yet also says to eat without asking questions in some contexts.

7. What does it mean to 'follow after the things which make for peace' without sacrificing principle or righteousness?

Consider: Weaver clarifies that Paul is not advocating peace at any price, but we should avoid unnecessary conflicts while still standing for truth.

Applications

Learn not to please ourselves

Believers should forego personal pleasures and preferences when necessary to serve and edify others, following Christ's example of self-denial.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'We cannot always please ourselves... Christ pleased not himself' and cites Romans 15:2-3 and Galatians 6:2.

Abstaining from pleasures is not harmful

Giving up temporary pleasures or time to minister to others is not a loss; God rewards such sacrifices. The work of God is more important than personal liberty.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'I have found when I give up my pleasure and my time to minister to God's people... God always rewards me' and references Romans 14:20.

Focus on internal righteousness, not external rules

The kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, not about food, drink, or other external observances. Prioritize pleasing God over personal indulgence.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Romans 14:17-18 and says, 'I'd rather please God than have a full stomach any day.'

Live with accountability to God

Remember that every believer will give an account of himself to God at the judgment seat of Christ, which should govern our attitudes and actions toward others.

Lecture support: Weaver reads Romans 14:10-12 and says, 'Our attitudes, our actions, our conduct will all be held accountable before our Lord.'

Pursue peace and edification

Actively seek to do things that promote peace and build up others, avoiding unnecessary conflicts, while recognizing that peace is not always possible with everyone.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Romans 14:19 and Romans 12:18, and says, 'We need to seek peace without unnecessarily causing contentions and conflicts.'

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 4

May 01, 2011

Read Chapter 4 in the companion book, pages 55-70.

Major Themes

Biblical Definition of Offense

Offense is not about upsetting someone but about causing a weaker brother to stumble by encouraging him to act without proper knowledge.

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

Christian liberty involves matters not inherently sinful, like food and days, where believers may differ without sin.

Lecture support: Weaver explains: 'Things that are indifferent are things which are not condemned in the Word of God, and they are things in which the consciences of believers do not uniformly hold as identical.'

Weak vs. Strong Believers

Only weak believers are offended in the biblical sense; their weakness is shown by stumbling when going against conscience.

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

Ignorance Leads to Stumbling

Stumbling results from a lack of knowledge, not from malice; the weak do not understand that idols are nothing.

Lecture support: Weaver notes: 'If someone stumbles and falls and is offended, it is because of ignorance.'

Conscience and Knowledge

Conscience is that which one knows with; acting against it without retraining is weakness, but retraining by Scripture is necessary.

Lecture support: Weaver explains: 'Your conscience is that which you know with... when you go contrary to that which you know, it's a sign of weakness.'

Misuse of 'Offense' in Modern Language

People often claim offense to silence others or express dislike, which is not the biblical concept.

Lecture support: Weaver illustrates: 'Don't say that. It offends me. Translated, that means this: Shut up, I don't want to hear it.'

Enjoying God's Creation Responsibly

Strong believers, with knowledge, can enjoy all things God gives without abusing them, using the world properly.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Timothy 6:17: 'who giveth us richly all things to enjoy' and 1 Corinthians 7:31: 'use this world, as not abusing it.'

Patience with Weaker Brethren

The strong must not condemn but patiently teach the weak, fighting the tendency to judge.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We're not to despise them, belittle them or browbeat them. We're to help them as we enjoy God's liberty.'

Key Arguments

Offense is not about anger or upset

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

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'The word offend does not mean to make mad or to make angry or to upset.'

Only weak believers can be offended biblically

The strong are not offended; offense is a sign of weakness because it involves acting against one's conscience.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'You can only offend a weak brother.'

Offense requires emboldening to act without knowledge

The mechanism of offense is the strong brother's example encouraging the weak to do something he doesn't understand, leading to defilement.

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

Things indifferent are not sinful in themselves

Matters like eating meat or observing days are not inherently sinful; sin is transgression of God's law, not material things.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'Eating meat is not sinful. Meat is not sinful in and of itself.'

Ignorance is the root cause of stumbling

The weak lack knowledge that idols are nothing and that all things are from God, leading to defiled consciences.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Corinthians 8:7: 'Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge... their conscience being weak is defiled.'

Conscience must be retrained by Scripture

Going against conscience is wrong unless one is actively retraining it to align with biblical truth.

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 claims of offense are often unbiblical

Statements like 'I'm offended' are frequently used to manipulate or silence, not reflecting the biblical concept.

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

Strong believers enjoy more of God's creation

Knowledge of liberty allows the strong to use and enjoy all things without abuse, as God intended.

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

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 sold to idols came from.

John 1:11-12

Weaver compares the word 'liberty' (power/right) to the authority given to become sons of God.

1 John 3:4

Weaver defines sin as transgression of the law to distinguish it from things indifferent.

Galatians 5:1

Weaver quotes this to emphasize standing fast in 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.

Proverbs 24:10

Weaver quotes this to support that fainting in adversity indicates 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 should not condemn himself in what he allows.

Romans 11:36

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

Hosea 4:6

Weaver references 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 'offend' as merely upsetting someone.

Isaiah 8:13-14

Weaver reads this to show Christ as a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to unbelievers.

Romans 9:33

Weaver quotes this to reinforce that Christ is a stumbling stone and rock of offense.

Galatians 5:11

Weaver quotes this to show that the offense of the cross ceases if circumcision is preached.

1 Peter 2:6-8

Weaver reads this to show Christ as a chief corner stone and a rock of offense to the disobedient.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

Weaver reads this to show that all things are ours in Christ.

Discussion Questions

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

Consider: Weaver argues that biblical offense is not about upsetting someone but about causing a weak brother to stumble by encouraging him to act without knowledge.

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2. What are some examples of 'things indifferent' in our contemporary church context, and how should we handle disagreements over them?

Consider: Weaver defines things indifferent as matters not sinful in themselves but where consciences differ, like food and days.

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3. Why is it important to recognize that only weak believers can be biblically offended? How does this affect our response when someone says, 'I'm offended'?

Consider: Weaver emphasizes that offense is a sign of weakness, not strength, and that the strong are not offended.

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

Consider: Weaver says it's not safe to go against conscience unless we are actively retraining it biblically.

5. In what ways might we be guilty of 'emboldening' a weaker brother to act without knowledge? Can you think of personal examples?

Consider: Weaver explains that offense occurs when we encourage a weak brother to do what we do without our understanding.

6. How does the truth that 'all things are yours' (1 Corinthians 3:21-23) change the way we enjoy God's creation?

Consider: Weaver applies the principle that strong believers can enjoy creation without abuse because they understand liberty.

7. What are practical ways to 'patiently consider and educate' weaker brethren without despising or condemning them?

Consider: Weaver urges the strong to help the weak grow in knowledge rather than judge them.

8. How does the example of Paul confronting Peter (Galatians 2) illustrate the difference between biblical rebuke and causing offense?

Consider: Weaver uses this example to show that upsetting someone is not the same as offending them biblically.

Applications

Distinguish biblical offense from emotional upset

Recognize that making someone mad or uncomfortable is not necessarily a biblical offense; offense is specifically causing a weak brother to stumble by acting without knowledge.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'The word offend does not mean to make mad or to make angry or to upset.'

Enjoy God's creation responsibly

Strong believers should use and enjoy all things God has given, without abusing them, because they understand their liberty in Christ.

Lecture support: Weaver cites 1 Timothy 6:17 and 1 Corinthians 7:31, saying: 'God has given us richly all things to enjoy' and 'use this world, as not abusing it.'

Patiently teach weaker brethren

Instead of condemning or despising those with weaker faith, we should patiently instruct them in the truth, helping them grow in knowledge.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We're not to despise them, belittle them or browbeat them. We're to help them as we enjoy God's liberty.'

Retrain your conscience biblically

When you realize a previously held belief is unbiblical, actively retrain your conscience by Scripture rather than simply violating it.

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.'

Avoid emboldening the weak to act without knowledge

Be mindful that your exercise of liberty does not encourage a weaker brother to do something he doesn't understand, which would cause him to stumble.

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.'

Fight the tendency to condemn the ignorant

Resist the fleshly urge to judge or condemn those who lack knowledge; instead, invest time in studying and seeking understanding.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We have to fight against the tendency to condemn those who are ignorant... It's easy to condemn and it's easy to judge. It is far more difficult to search out the truth.'

Be fully persuaded in your own mind

On matters of indifference, know what you believe and why, and act in faith without imposing your convictions on others.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Romans 14:5: 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.'

Receive weak believers without disputing

Welcome those weak in faith into fellowship without engaging in arguments over doubtful matters, trusting God to give them understanding.

Lecture support: Weaver references Romans 14:1: 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.'

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 5

How to Avoid Conflicts 5

May 08, 2011

Read Chapter 5 in the companion book, pages 71-89.

Major Themes

Biblical Definition of Offense

Offense is strictly defined as encouraging a weaker brother to act against his conscience without proper knowledge, not merely upsetting or angering someone.

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 regarding indifferent matters, but this liberty must be exercised with love and consideration for weaker brethren, never forsaking the principle but sometimes foregoing its exercise.

Lecture support: Weaver explains: '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.'

Sin Against Christ Through Offending a Brother

Offending a weak brother is a sin not only against the brother but against Christ, because it violates His command to love, harms one united to Him, and insults His lordship over the conscience.

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

The Role of Knowledge and Conscience

The weak are weak due to ignorance; they lack knowledge that an idol is nothing. Offense occurs when they act without this knowledge, violating their conscience.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'The ignorant, the weak, are weak because of their ignorance. They do not understand the sovereignty of God.'

The Necessity of Rebuke and Admonition

Misunderstanding offense has led to a loss of the biblical practice of warning and admonishing one another, which are commanded in Scripture.

Lecture support: Weaver points to Acts 20:31, Romans 15:14, Colossians 1:28, and Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25, emphasizing the words 'warn,' 'admonish,' and 'exhort.'

Freedom from Man-Made Traditions

Christian liberty frees believers from traditions that bind the conscience beyond Scripture. Conscience is bound only to God's Word.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'My conscience is bound to the Word of God. I can't come along demanding that you do this and you do that and you do it exactly the way I understand it.'

Key Arguments

Offense is not about hurt feelings but about causing a weak brother to sin against conscience.

Weaver argues that the common understanding of offense as upsetting someone is a perversion; biblically, offense only occurs when a weak brother is emboldened to act without knowledge.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We have taken the biblical doctrine of offense and perverted it and we 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.'

The strong must consider the weak without surrendering liberty.

While we must never forsake the principle of Christian liberty, we may forego its exercise for the sake of the gospel, personal holiness, or weaker brethren.

Lecture support: Weaver states: '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.'

Offending a weak brother is a serious sin against Christ.

Because weak brethren are united to Christ and He is Lord of their conscience, causing them to stumble is an insult to His sacrifice and authority.

Lecture support: Weaver explains: 'Placing a piece of meat ahead of a brother who's been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ is an open insult to Jesus Christ.'

The church must recover the practice of mutual admonition.

Scripture commands believers to warn, admonish, and exhort one another; this has been neglected due to fear of offending, but true offense is not about rebuke.

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

Christian liberty frees from man-made rules.

Believers are not bound to traditions or opinions not found in Scripture; conscience is subject only to God's Word.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Our conscience is bound only to the word of God.'

Scripture References**Romans 14:1-3**

Introduction to the weak and strong, receiving without disputations.

1 Corinthians 8:1-7

Knowledge puffs up, love edifies; idols are nothing; weak conscience defiled.

1 Corinthians 8:8-13

Meat does not commend us to God; liberty must not become a stumbling block; sin against brethren is sin against Christ.

Galatians 5:11

The offense of the cross ceases if circumcision is preached.

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 rock of offense to those who disobey.

1 John 3:4

Sin is transgression of the law; eating meat is not sin.

1 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 11-12

Weak conscience defiled; liberty a stumbling block to the weak; sin against brethren wounds weak conscience.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6

Idol is nothing; there is one God and one Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 8:10

If a weak brother sees you eating in an idol's temple, his conscience is emboldened.

1 Corinthians 8:12

Sin against brethren and wounding their weak conscience is sin against Christ.

Psalms 51:4

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

Galatians 6:10

Do good to all, 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; nothing unclean of itself; walk in love; kingdom of God is not meat and drink.

Galatians 5:13-14

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

1 Corinthians 9:3-5

Paul had the right to marry and lead about a wife, but did not for the gospel.

1 Corinthians 7:32-33

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

Psalms 101:3

I will set no wicked thing before my eyes.

Hebrews 12:14

Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

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

Consider: Weaver argues that biblical offense is about causing a weak brother to act against conscience, not about hurt feelings.

2. In what ways can we forego the exercise of our Christian liberty without forsaking the principle?

Consider: Weaver gives three reasons: furtherance of the gospel, personal holiness, and consideration of weaker brethren.

3. Why is offending a weak brother considered a sin against Christ?

Consider: Weaver explains it violates Christ's command to love, harms one united to Christ, and insults His lordship over conscience.

4. How can we recover the practice of biblical rebuke and admonition in the church today?

Consider: Weaver notes that misunderstanding offense has led to a loss of mutual warning and exhortation.

5. What is the difference between traditions that are helpful and those that bind the conscience?

Consider: Weaver states that traditions are fine if biblical or understood as non-binding, but become problematic when they are imposed as requirements.

6. How can both strong and weak believers potentially destroy the work of God?

Consider: Weaver says the strong may destroy by condemnation and impatience, the weak by judging and demanding.

Applications

Distinguish between biblical offense and hurt feelings.

Believers should not equate being upset with being offended; true offense is causing a weak brother to sin against conscience.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We have taken the biblical doctrine of offense and perverted it... it has absolutely nothing to do with that.'

Forego liberty for the sake of weaker brethren.

When exercising liberty, consider whether it might embolden a weaker brother to act without knowledge; be willing to limit your freedom out of love.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.'

Practice biblical admonition without fear of offending.

Restore the practice of warning and exhorting one another, understanding that 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 only to Scripture, not human traditions.

Refuse to submit to man-made rules that go beyond God's Word; stand fast in Christian liberty.

Lecture support: Weaver states: 'My conscience is bound to the Word of God... If it's not in Scripture, I'm not bound.'

Exercise liberty with wisdom and compassion.

Avoid being a 'spiritual bull in a china shop'; consider the impact of your actions on weaker believers and prioritize their edification.

Lecture support: Weaver says: 'We're not to be spiritual bulls in the proverbial china shop demanding our way or else we'll tear the place apart.'

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.

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Lecture JW00704

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Lesson 2: How to Avoid Conflicts 2

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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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