

Romans 14:13-23

“A good sermon should comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

“That we offend is not the issue but rather who, why and how we offend.”

Romans 14-15

Paul recognizes at least two types of Christians -

“Now we who are **strong** ought to bear the weaknesses of **those without strength** and not just please ourselves.” Rom.15:1

What does spiritual maturity look like?

Romans 14:13-23

“¹³ **Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.** ¹⁴ I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

“¹⁸ For he who in this {way} serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue the things, which make for peace and the building up of one another. ²⁰ Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or {to do anything} by which your brother stumbles. ²² The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because {his eating is} not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.”

Dedicated disciples should **agree** on all issues.

This is false!

Acts 15 “³⁹ **And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another,** and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. ⁴⁰ But Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.”

Mature Christians should **never offend** others.

This is false!

Matt.15 “¹² Then the disciples come and said to Him, “**Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?**” (defending His violation of the traditions of the elders – hand washing) ¹³ But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up. ¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

Spiritual maturity is marked by what we are **freed** from.

This is false!

Acts 16 “³ Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and **circumcised him because of the Jews** who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”

Spiritually mature believers are **separate from the world** in all areas.

This is false!

Spiritual maturity is indicated by how much **money** we have.

This is false!

Spiritual maturity is marked by our commitment to **change others**.

This is false!

Three types of people

Weaker Brother

“They may choke on solid food”

Stronger Brother

“They can handle many situations gracefully.”

Pharisee

“They use their convictions as weapons.”

The Kingdom of God

To the Pharisee

Matt.23:23 “For you tithe mint and dill and cummin and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law; **justice** and **mercy** and **faithfulness**.”

To the Strong

Rom.14:17 “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness** and **peace** and **joy** in the Holy Spirit.”

Righteousness = love?

Peace = community?

Joy = celebration?

Principle #1

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of what is most important.

Community	over	individual rights
Love	over	knowledge
Sacrificial service	over	personal comfort
Personal faith	over	faith of others
Judging self	over	judging others
Accepting others	over	changing others

Accommodating differences

Promoted

- **Differing Ministry gifts**
Teaching, evangelism, administration
- **Differing Cultural perspectives**
Jew, Gentile, Black, White, Rich, Poor

Permitted

- **Differing Style preferences**
Traditional & contemporary worship
- **Minor doctrine & behavior differences**
Mode of baptism, divorce,

Prohibited

- **Core doctrine**
Resurrection of Christ, Salvation by grace through faith
- **Core ethics**
Fornication, divisiveness

Principle #1

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of what is most important.

Principle #2

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of the meaning of love.

Phil.1:9-10

“And this I pray, that your **love may abound** still more and more in real **knowledge and all discernment**. So that you may approve that things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.”

Love is the commitment to move toward others with a desire to edify their inner spirit.

- Love means that I must **understand** the vulnerable side of the one loved.
- Love involves a **caring and protecting** of the one loved.
- Love does not **project self** on the one loved.

“¹³ Therefore let us not **judge** one another **anymore**, but rather **determine** this-- not to put an **obstacle** or a **stumbling block** in a brother's way.”

- The word “**judge**” and “**determine**” are the same word in the Greek text. **If you are going to judge, judge on how best to love.**
- Paul is speaking of Christian “**brothers**.” **“It takes a community to make a mature disciple.”**
- “**Anymore**” suggests that it is common for Christians to fall short in this area. **Don't let this kind of judging continue.**
- “**Obstacle**” or “**stumbling block**” = anything that might derail a brother's spiritual life. **Paul's example is eating and drinking.**

We are not asked to accommodate:

A prideful spirit - The Pharisee

A rebellious spirit - Judas

Sinful behavior - Corinthians

An unteachable heart - Heb. 5

A racist spirit - Ephesians

Principle #1

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of what is most important.

Principle #2

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of the meaning of love.

Principle #3

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of other's perceptions.

"¹⁴ I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who **thinks** anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

"**Thinks**" is "**reckons**" or "**accounts as true**" in Greek

Two "realities"

Objective

This reality is accessible to the "strong" in faith.

Subjective

This reality is the perception of those who are "weak" in faith.

We must respect this reality and accommodate it.

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Principle #3

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of other's perceptions.

Principle #4

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of how to edify others.

"All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or {to do anything} by which your brother stumbles."

- **Freedom that is not in the service of love is evil.**
- **Knowledge makes us strong while love makes us good.**
- **The knowledge that enables us to edify others is greater than the knowledge that sets us free.**

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Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of what is most important.

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Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of the meaning of love.

Principle #3

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of other's perceptions.

Principle #4

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of how to edify others.

Principle #5

Spiritual maturity is measured by our discernment of God's work.

“¹⁹ So then let us pursue the things, which make for peace and the building up of one another. ²⁰ Do not tear down **the work of God** for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.”

The work of God is the “building up” of the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4

“¹¹ And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for **the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ**; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Romans 8:29-30

“²⁹ For whom He **foreknew**, He also predestined {to become} conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; ³⁰ and whom He **predestined**, these He also called; and whom He **called**, these He also justified; and whom He **justified**, these He also **glorified**.”



Matthew 15:11

“Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”

**Defilement is
a heart and mind issue.**

To the strong in faith:

**Are you willing to constrain
your liberty out of love?**

To the weak in faith:

**Are you willing to limit your
constraints to yourself?**

**What constitutes “a stumbling
block?”**

What are the limits to unity?

**What about those situations
where you can’t help but offend
someone?**