Study 14

# Pursue What Makes For Peace

Romans 14

**In The Group**

- At the end of your life, what are 3 words that will describe you?
- What is one country that you have never been to and would like visit?
- What's the last non-biblical book you read and could you recommend it?

Judgmentalism is often confused with *discernment* or even *accountability*. Being 'judgmental' is acting *arrogantly* because it is demeaning and condescending (the person being judgmental looks down at the one they are judging). Judgmentalism is therefore *inconsiderate*. The theme of Romans 14 is *be considerate of one another.*

Dr. F. W. Boreham tells the story of a fellow Baptist minister who had been accused of gross misconduct. Dr. Boreham had been charged to investigate the matter. The evidence looked clear-cut that the accused pastor was indeed guilty. But an older minister counselled Dr Boreham to be cautious. He shared how he himself had nearly been disqualified from being ordained because of women and alcohol! He told of how a young woman had come around to his house one night in a very distressed state. After counselling and comforting her, he bid her good night and she set off by foot back to her home in the dark. The pastor saw the potential for the young woman's harm and told her that he would accompany her. He walked her home in the dark without incident. It was only later that he realised how suspicious this might have looked and was thankful that they had not met anyone along the way. On another occasion the same pastor and his driver had been visiting members of his congregation spread across a large country pastorate. As it turned out, after visiting four families without arriving at their meal times, the pastor had not eaten or drunk anything all day. Around evening meal time he had one final call to make. He arrived at this elderly widow's home after she had already had her dinner. He mentioned to her that he had not had anything to drink or eat all day. She offered him some of her home-made "dandelion tea". She assured him that it was just "tea". He drank one cup. After the visit he staggered back to his vehicle and driver. Despite the widow's assurances, her "tea" was actually a potent alcoholic wine! By the time he reached home he was very drunk and grateful that no-one called in that night and that his driver was discreet! He reflected to Dr Boreham that in both instances an observer could have had ammunition to charge him with conduct unbecoming an ordained minister of the Gospel. With this counsel in mind, the accused pastor was investigated and at the last minute another person confessed to the things the now vindicated and innocent pastor had been accused of.

1. How does Romans 14:1 encourage mature believers to deal with people who disagree with them?

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"Weak" is used in different senses to describe a follower of Christ. In this sense in Romans 14 it is about the strength of a believer's conscience to do what they had previously believed God had forbidden. Another Biblical sense of *weak* is *immature* (that is *young in the faith and unfamiliar with the Scripture's teaching*).

2. How can we make a *weak* brother feel *unwelcome*? (Rom. 14:1)

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3. What is the best way to share your *opinion* about what God approves of without *quarrelling* with someone? (Rom 14:1)

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4. Based on Romans 14:2, do our diets determine whether we are right with God? Why?

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## DIVISIVE ISSUES

For the believer there are "*primary issues*" (character/identity/nature of God, our salvation), "*secondary issues*" (mode of baptism, , and *matters of individual conscience*. Romans 14:3-6 establishes the principle of being "fully convinced" (Rom. 14:5) about those matters of conscience a believer holds. This passage gives us one of the major principles for how we determine our response to the issue of eating meat, drinking alcohol, or the day we choose to observe as a day of collective worship.

5. How should we interact with another believer who differs with us in matters of conscience regarding some of the issues mentioned above? (Consider Rom. 14:7)

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The difficulty with holding a position of conscience is the ease with which it is possible to become convinced that it is actually a matter of *primary* importance (God and our salvation).

## GOD WILL JUDGE EACH OF US

6. How should a knowledge of Romans 14:10 cause believers to live differently?

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When we gave our hearts to Christ and received His forgiveness that He earned for us, we passed from being under God's judgment and entered into eternal life (see John 5:24).

7. How does Romans 14:12 show that believers will one day give account to God for how they have lived? (refer to 2Cor. 5)

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## WALK IN LOVE

If a believer is encouraged to violate their conscience, it opens up the doorway for them to to what the Scriptures clearly forbid.

8. Considering Romans 14:13, how might a believer put a "stumbling block" or "hindrance" in the way of a fellow believer regarding a matter of conscience? (Note verse 20 as well.)

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Following Christ means that we are more concerned about *loving* our fellow believer than we are in proving them wrong (Rom. 14:19).

It might sound as if the Apostle Paul is saying that matters of conscience are not important.

9. But what final comment does he make concerning following Christ with a clear conscience that shows this is extremely important to do? (Rom. 14:23)

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The follower of Christ soon discovers that living for Jesus changes the way they treat others, especially the weak and the wrong. Learning how to share your opinions and knowledge with others is often the cause of conflict with others.

10. What does Romans 14 teach us about following Christ?

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11. Write out your prayerful response to what we have studied in this chapter-

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*Amen.*