LESSON NINE

Built Different

"A Disciple Uses Freedom to Build Others Up"

SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

MEMORY VERSE

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Built different: disciples prioritize the community of faith, building unity.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM

Discipleship Distinctive: Biblical Community

GROUP TIME

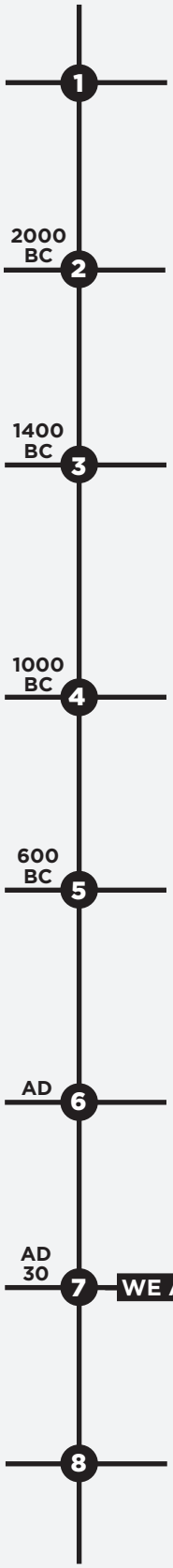
5 minutes	**Welcome**
5–10 minutes	**Attention Grabber**
10 minutes	**Story / Context**
25 minutes	**Discussion**
5–10 minutes	**Closing & Prayer**

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Rooted –** pray for the Rooted session that is in progress. This week, Rooted groups will learn about and experience confession around strongholds. Pray for freedom in Christ and for participants to boldly confront areas of their lives where they are enslaved, and for courage to confess and find healing in their groups.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

GOD'S STORY TIMELINE



1. God Creates the World and Promises a Rescuer *(Genesis 1-11)*
God created everything good and placed humans in a garden to live in close relationship with Him. But Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves instead of God, and sin entered the world. Relationships, creation, even our connection to God was broken. Yet even in judgment, God promised that one day, a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent and bring healing.
+This points to Jesus as the promised Rescuer who defeats sin, Satan, and death.

2. God Calls a Family and Makes a Promise *(Genesis 12-50)*
God chose a man named Abram (later Abraham) and gave a covenant to him: that he would have a large family, receive a land, and be a blessing to all nations. Though Abraham and his descendants were deeply flawed, God continued His promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
+This points to Jesus as the true offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are fully blessed.

3. God Rescues His People and Forms a Redeemed Nation *(Exodus-Deuteronomy)*
Generations later, Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up Moses to rescue them from oppression and slavery. God called His people into a relationship with Himself. He made a covenant with them, gave them the law, and instructed them in worship. He was forming a people who would live differently and show the world what it looked like to belong to Him.
+This points to Jesus as the greater Moses, who rescues us from slavery to sin and writes God's law on our hearts.

4. God Gives a Home and Promises a King *(Joshua-2 Chronicles)*
God brought His people into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. Over time, they asked for a king like the other nations. It was a disaster. But God graciously gave them David, with whom he made another covenant: one of David's descendants would rule forever. Solomon built the temple, but after his death, the kingdom split into two and began spiraling into idolatry and injustice again.
+This points to Jesus as the forever King from David's line, who reigns with justice and peace.

5. God Removes His People and Reminds Them of His Promise *(Ezra-Nehemiah)*
Because of their rebellion, God allowed His people to be conquered and taken into exile. First, it was the Northern Kingdom, Israel (to Assyria), then the Southern Kingdom, Judah (to Babylon). The temple was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom faded. Yet God continued to speak through the prophets, reminding the people of His promise to restore them, give them new hearts, and send a Rescuer.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the new covenant, restores hearts, and fulfills every prophecy.

6. God Sends His Son and Fulfills His Promise *(Matthew-John)*
At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed the law, pointed us to the Father, and laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, proving that He is the Savior, the King, and the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has ever made.
+Jesus is the center of the story—all of Scripture leads to Him.

7. God Sends His Spirit and Builds His Church *(Acts-Jude)*
After rising from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The early Church spread the good news of Jesus across the Roman world—planting churches, welcoming both Jews and Gentiles, and learning to live as God's new covenant people. Though imperfect, the Church carries Jesus' mission forward today.
+This points to Jesus as the risen King who gives the Spirit to dwell in us and send us on mission.

8. God Restores All Things and Dwells with His People *(Revelation)*
The story isn't over. One day Jesus will return to judge evil and make all things new. There will be a new heaven and new earth, where God's people from every tribe and nation will live with Him forever. There will be no more pain, no more death, and no more sin—just joy, justice, and unbroken peace.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the story to its perfect and eternal culmination.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

LEADER TIP

To grab your participants' attention, start your lesson by telling a story related to the lesson's main idea. We have provided you with three options in this section, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: WORLD WAR 2 RATIONING

During World War II, families in the United States used ration books for items like sugar, coffee, meat, fats, and canned goods. People could not simply buy as much as they wanted whenever they wanted. Supplies had to be shared, soldiers had to be supported, and ordinary households were asked to limit themselves for the sake of something larger than personal preference.

Rationing required people to think beyond their own table. A family might have wanted more sugar, more gasoline, or more meat, but the question was not only, "What do I want?" The question became, "What does love of neighbor and shared responsibility require?" Personal freedom was willingly limited for the good of others.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What happens to others when everyone only thinks about what they want?*
- *How can thinking of others affect the way we use our freedom?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
World War II rationing reminds us that personal preference and freedom can be surrendered for the good of others. In 1 Corinthians 8:1–13, Paul teaches believers to use freedom in a way that builds up the community of faith. A disciple is built different because they prioritize the community of faith, building unity.

OPTION 2: AT EASE IN ZION (AMOS 6)

In Amos 6, the prophet speaks to people who had grown comfortable while the community around them was falling apart. They reclined on expensive furniture, ate the finest food, drank wine by the bowlful, and enjoyed music and luxury. From the outside, their lives may have looked successful. But Amos exposes the deeper problem: they "do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph" (Amos 6:6).

Their comfort had made them careless. They had the means to enjoy life, but they were using their position, resources, and freedom without concern for the people of God. They were not asking how their lives could strengthen the community. They were asking how much they could enjoy for themselves.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *How can personal freedom become selfish?*
- *Why is it dangerous when personal comfort disconnects you from others?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
Amos 6 shows the danger of using comfort and freedom without con-

cern for the community of faith. In 1 Corinthians 8:1–13, Paul addresses believers who knew they had freedom, but needed to learn how love towards others influences that freedom. A disciple is built different because they prioritize the community of faith, building unity.

OPTION 3: THE FRIEND WHO CAN'T EAT CAKE

Imagine a group of friends going out to celebrate, and one of them has recently learned they can no longer eat cake. Maybe it is because of a health issue, or maybe it is part of a difficult change they are trying to make. The hard part is that they love cake. Everyone else at the table is free to order dessert. They are not doing anything wrong by eating cake. But once they know their friend is struggling, the question changes.

They could order slices for everyone else and basically communicate, "Too bad for you." Or they could decide that, for this meal, loving their friend matters more than enjoying their freedom. Giving up cake does not mean cake is bad. It means the people around the table matter more than proving what everyone has the right to eat.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What would it communicate if everyone insisted on their preferences?*
- *Why is it hard to give up something we enjoy for someone else's good?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
A friend who cannot eat cake reminds us that freedom is not only about what we are allowed to do. In 1 Corinthians 8:1–13, Paul teaches believers to consider how their choices affect others in the community of faith. A disciple is built different because they prioritize the community of faith, building unity.

2 SET THE STAGE

LEADER TIP

This section provides the historical, cultural, and literary context needed to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

I. Greetings and Thanksgiving (1:1–9)
II. Problems in the church (1:10–6:20)
  A. Divisions and factions (1:10–4:21)
  B. Gross immorality (5:1–13)
  C. Litigation before pagan courts (6:1–11)
  D. Fornication with prostitutes (6:12–20)
III. Replies to questions from the Corinthians (7:1–14:40)
  A. Questions about marriage (7:1–40)
  B. Limitations of Christian liberty (8:1–11:1)
  C. Veiling of women in public worship (11:2–16)
  D. Disorderly behavior at the Lord's Supper (11:17–34)
  E. Exercise of spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40)
IV. The Resurrection of the Body (15:1–58)
  A. Centrality of Christ's resurrection (15:1–20)
  B. Sequence of resurrection events (15:21–28)
  C. The resurrection and suffering (15:29–34)
  D. Nature of the resurrection body (15:35–49)
  E. The believer's victory over death (15:50–58)
V. Conclusion (16:1–24)
  A. Collection for the believers at Jerusalem (16:1–4)
  B. Paul's plans for visiting Corinth (16:5–9)
  C. Exhortations, instructions, and salutations (16:10–24)[1]

CONTEXT

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul turns to another question the Corinthians had raised: food sacrificed to idols. In Corinth, meat was often connected to pagan temples, religious meals, social gatherings, and the public marketplace. Some believers knew that idols were nothing and that there is only one true God, so they felt free to eat it. Other believers, especially those with a history of idol worship, could not separate the meal from their former life and might be spiritually harmed by seeing another Christian eat. Paul does not answer the issue by only asking, "What are we allowed to do?" He teaches the Corinthians to ask a better question: "What does love lead us to?" Knowledge can make a person proud, but love builds up the community of faith by considering others. A disciple is built different because they use freedom to strengthen others rather than simply protecting their own rights.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

We tend to use our freedom for self-protection and self-expression rather than loving others. We can hide pride behind knowledge, insist on our rights, ignore the weakness of others, and damage the community while believing we are simply doing what we are allowed to do. We adopt an attitude of "That's not my problem."

[1] F. Alan Tomlinson, "1 Corinthians," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1811.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Jesus did not use His freedom, power, or rights to serve Himself. He came in love, took the form of a servant, and gave His life to save weak and sinful people. Through His death and resurrection, He creates a new community where people are no longer ruled by pride, selfishness, or personal preference. Because we belong to Christ, we are free to use our freedom for love, unity, and the good of others.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM: BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

Biblical community is more than attending the same church or sitting in the same group every week. It is the practice of belonging to one another in Christ. In a group, people are not abstract ideas. They have names, stories, temptations, wounds, histories, and places where obedience feels costly. Biblical community teaches disciples to pay attention to the spiritual good of the people God has placed around them.

That kind of life changes the questions we ask. Instead of asking only, “What am I free to do?” we learn to ask, “How will this affect my brother or sister?” In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul shows that love is willing to limit freedom when another believer’s faith is at stake. A disciple is built different because they prioritize the community of faith, using their freedom to build unity rather than protect their own rights.

3 LOOK AT THE BOOK

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your group through Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the leader, work through all the exercises below to ensure you understand the text well.

1 Corinthians 8:1–3 Chapter 8 opens with Paul taking up a new issue: "food sacrificed to idols" (v. 1). The phrase "now about" likely signals another topic the Corinthians had raised in their letter to Paul. In Corinth, this was a practical discipleship question. Pagan temples were woven into the social and economic life of the city. Meat could be served at temple meals, sold in the marketplace after sacrifice, or connected to social gatherings where idol worship had shaped the environment. The question was not abstract: Could a Christian eat this food?

Before Paul answers the food question directly, he addresses the posture of the people asking it. The Corinthians seem to be repeating a slogan: "We all possess knowledge" (v. 1). Some believers understood that idols were not real gods and that meat did not become spiritually powerful because it had been offered in a pagan setting. Their theological conclusion was partly right. But Paul knows that a right conclusion can still be used in a wrong way.

The contrast in verse 1 is the key: "Knowledge puffs up while love builds up." Knowledge can inflate a person. It can make them feel superior, impatient, and dismissive toward those who do not understand as much as they do. Love does the opposite. Love does not inflate the self; love strengthens the church. This is not an argument against doctrine. Paul will affirm their theology in verses 4–6. The problem is knowledge severed from love. Truth is meant to build people, not make the knowledgeable person feel bigger.

Verse 2 sharpens the warning: "Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know." Paul is not saying knowledge is impossible or unimportant. He is saying that anyone who uses knowledge arrogantly has not yet understood knowledge properly. True knowledge of God produces humility, worship, and love for His people. In verse 3, Paul turns the issue around: "Whoever loves God is known by God." The deepest characteristic about a disciple is not that they have mastered information, but that God has graciously known them. That should humble the strong and make them careful with the people God loves.

1 Corinthians 8:4–6 In verses 4–6, Paul affirms the doctrinal truth the Corinthians were using. "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and "there is no God but one" (v. 4). Paul agrees that idols are not rival deities. They do not possess true divine power. The meat has not been changed into something spiritually dangerous by the idol itself. Christians do not live in fear of idols because there is only one true God.

Verse 5 acknowledges the religious world around them: "Even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth." Corinth was full of temples, religious meals, household gods, civic rituals, and social events connected to pagan worship. Many "gods" and many "lords" were recognized by the culture. Paul does not deny that these religious claims existed socially. He denies that they are ultimate reality.

Verse 6 gives the Christian confession: "For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." This verse carries serious theological weight. Paul echoes the Jewish confession that there is one God, while also naming Jesus as the one Lord through whom believers live. The Father is the source and goal of all things. Jesus Christ is Lord over creation and redemption. Christian freedom is grounded in this confession. Since believers belong to the one true God through the one Lord Jesus Christ, idols no longer define reality for them.

But this correct theology does not end the discussion. Paul agrees with their doctrine, but he challenges the way they are applying it. The Corinthians appear to think, "If idols are nothing, then I am free to eat." Paul says the Christian must ask more than one question. It is not enough to ask, "Is this allowed for me?" Love also asks, "How does this affect my brother or sister in Christ?"

1 Corinthians 8:7–8 Verse 7 introduces the pastoral complication: "But not everyone possesses this knowledge." Some believers had spent years worshiping idols before coming to Christ. For them, food connected to an idol was not merely food. It carried memories, loyalties, rituals, fears, and temptations from their former life. Their conscience was "weak" because it was still vulnerable in this particular area.

The word "conscience" here refers to a person's moral awareness before God. A weak conscience is not worthless or silly. It is a conscience that has not yet been fully settled by the truth of Christian freedom. If these believers ate, they might not experience the meal as neutral. They might experience it as participation in idolatry, and their conscience would be "defiled" (v. 7). In other words, they would be acting against what they believed faithfulness to Christ required.

Verse 8 keeps the issue from becoming legalistic: "Food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do." Food does not establish anyone's standing before God. Eating does not make the strong more mature in a way they can boast about. Abstaining does not make the weak more righteous in a way they can boast about. Paul refuses to let food become spiritually ultimate.

This is important for the whole passage. Paul is not saying Christians must surrender every freedom whenever someone has a different opinion. He is dealing with a specific kind of danger: one believer's freedom may encourage another believer to violate conscience and move back toward sin. Biblical community does not mean every preference becomes a command. It does mean love pays attention when another person's faith-practice is at stake.

1 Corinthians 8:9–13 The central command comes in verse 9: "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak." The word translated "rights" carries the idea of freedom or authority. Paul recognizes that the strong may truly have freedom in this matter. But Christian freedom can become dangerous when it is used without regard for another believer's spiritual good.

A "stumbling block" is not simply something that irritates another person. In this passage, it is something that trips a believer into sin. Verse 10 gives the scenario. A believer with a weak conscience sees

a knowledgeable believer eating “in an idol’s temple.” That detail matters. Paul is not only imagining a private meal at home. He pictures a setting visibly connected to idol worship. The weaker believer may be “emboldened” to eat, even though their conscience still connects that meal to idolatry.

There is an irony in verse 10. Paul has already said love “builds up” (v. 1). But here the strong person’s example “builds up” the weak person in the wrong direction. Instead of being strengthened toward Christ, the weaker believer is encouraged toward sin. Knowledge without love can still have influence, but it may influence someone toward unholy living rather than faithfulness.

Verse 11 is the emotional and theological center of the warning: “So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge.” Paul forces the strong to see the weak believer through the cross. This person is not an inconvenience, an obstacle, or an overly sensitive Christian. This is a brother or sister for whom Christ died. If Jesus gave His life for them, then the strong cannot treat their spiritual harm as a small matter.

Verse 12 raises the seriousness even more: “When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.” The issue is not merely interpersonal. Christ identifies Himself with His people. To wound a brother or sister’s conscience is to sin against the Lord who died for them. The strong believer may think the issue is only meat, knowledge, and freedom. Paul says it is also about Christ.

Paul closes with his own resolve in verse 13: “If what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again.” This is not a new food law for every situation. It is Paul showing the logic of love. He would rather surrender a real freedom than use that freedom in a way that spiritually harms someone Christ loves.

Christian maturity is not merely knowing what is permitted. It is knowing how to love. Knowledge tells the truth about idols. Love tells the truth about people. A disciple is built different because they prioritize the community of faith, using freedom to build unity rather than damage another believer for the sake of personal rights.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

8 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. 2 Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. 3 But whoever loves God is known by God. e

4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

7 But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it

as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall. [2]

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1–3. What issue does Paul introduce? What contrast does he make between knowledge and love?

Suggested Response: Paul introduces the issue of food sacrificed to idols. He says, "We all possess knowledge," but then says knowledge "puffs up" while love "builds up." He also says that anyone who thinks they know something does not yet know as they ought to know, and that whoever loves God is known by God.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: IDOLS, GOD, AND CONSCIENCE

Read 1 Corinthians 8:4–8. What does Paul say about idols? What does he say about food sacrificed to idols?

Suggested Response: Paul says an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. He says there is one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom believers live, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom believers live. Paul also says not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food, they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and their weak conscience is defiled. Paul says food does not bring us near to God, and we are no worse if we do not eat and no better if we do.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: RIGHTS AND STUMBLING BLOCKS

Read 1 Corinthians 8:9–13. What warning does Paul give about the exercise of rights?

Suggested Response: Paul warns believers to be careful that the exercise of their rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. He describes a situation where someone with a weak conscience sees another believer eating in an idol's temple and is emboldened to eat food sacrificed to idols. Paul says this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by another

[2] *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Co 8:1–13.

person's knowledge. He says that wounding their weak conscience is sinning against Christ. Paul concludes that if what he eats causes his brother or sister to fall into sin, he will never eat meat again.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: THE DANGER OF CERTAIN KINDS OF "KNOWLEDGE"

In 1 Corinthians 8:1–3, what kind of "knowledge" is Paul correcting?

Suggested Response: Paul is correcting knowledge that is true but incomplete because it has become separated from love. Some Corinthians understood the theology of idols and food, but they were using that knowledge to feel superior rather than to strengthen the church. Paul is not saying doctrine is unimportant. He is saying that knowledge has not been properly understood until it leads to humility, love for God, and care for the people God loves.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: THE PURPOSE OF FREEDOM

In 1 Corinthians 8:4–8, Paul moves the question from "What am I free to do?" to "What is my freedom for?" Why is this important?

Suggested Response: Paul agrees that idols are not true gods and that food does not bring believers nearer to God or farther from God. But he does not let the Corinthians stop with the question of permission. Their freedom is real, but it is meant to serve love. The deeper issue is not only whether a Christian may eat certain food, but whether that choice helps or harms the community of faith.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: THE SERIOUSNESS OF WOUNDING A CONSCIENCE

In 1 Corinthians 8:9–13, what makes wounding a weaker believer's conscience so serious?

Suggested Response: Paul is not talking about annoying someone or violating their personal preference. He is describing a situation where a believer is encouraged to act against conscience and move toward sin. That matters because the weak believer is someone "for whom Christ died." Paul wants the strong to see the person through the cross before they see the issue through the lens of rights. To damage someone Christ died to save is not a small matter. Paul says it is sin against Christ Himself. Christian freedom becomes sinful when it is used in a way that harms the faith of another believer.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God calls them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: Paul says knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Describe a time when you focused on being right instead of building up the other person.

Suggested Response: I may know the right answer about a biblical issue, a personal freedom, or a matter of conscience, but still use that knowledge with pride. Being right does not automatically mean I am loving. Paul reminds us that maturity is not only measured by what we understand. It is also measured by whether what we understand helps build up the people around us.

As your group responds, use follow-up questions to guide below surface-level responses. Encourage transparent responses.

QUESTION 2: How does being known by God change the way you consider others?

Suggested Response: Being known by God should make me humble instead of arrogant. I do not have to prove my maturity by showing what I know or defending everything I am free to do. Being known by God satisfies my deepest need. Since God has known me by grace, I can use my knowledge and freedom with patience, gentleness, and love for others.

QUESTION 3: In 1 Corinthians 8:4–8, Paul recognizes that not every believer experiences the same issue in the same way. Whose story or struggle do you need to consider more carefully?

Suggested Response: I may need to consider someone who has a different background, a tender conscience, a past struggle, or a place where obedience feels especially costly. Love does not assume everyone experiences an issue the way I do. Biblical community means paying attention to the people God has placed around me.

QUESTION 4: What is an area where you usually ask, "Am I allowed?" before asking, "Will this build up others?"

Suggested Response: This could include alcohol, entertainment, social media, language, politics, money, dating, parenting decisions, or personal preferences. The question is not whether every freedom is wrong. The question is whether I am willing to think about how my freedom affects the faith and unity of others.

QUESTION 5: In 1 Corinthians 8:9–13, Paul warns that freedom can become a stumbling block. What would it look like for you to take that warning seriously without becoming legalistic?

Suggested Response: It means I should not create rules where Scripture does not create rules, but I also should not treat my freedom carelessly. Taking Paul seriously means asking whether my choices could encourage someone else toward sin, confusion, or compromise. Love does not control others, but it gladly limits itself for their spiritual good.

QUESTION 6: What decision would change this week if you thought of others first?

Suggested Response: I might change the way I speak about a disputed issue, what I post online, how I use a freedom, how I respond to someone's weakness, or how I treat a person who sees something differently than I do. Building unity does not mean pretending every issue is the same. It means choosing love over pride and the good of the community over the defense of my rights. Forsaking these builds unity and protects others.

QUESTION 7: How can our group help one another use freedom in ways that build unity instead of creating division?

Suggested Response: Our group can help one another by speaking honestly about areas of freedom, conscience, and temptation without pride or pressure. We can refuse to shame people who are weaker in a particular area, and we can refuse to use freedom in ways that make obedience harder for someone else. Biblical community means we help each other ask better questions: not only "What am I allowed to do?" but "Will this build up the people Christ has placed around me?"

4 CHALLENGE

LEADER TIP

End your study time with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

A disciple is built different because they prioritize the community of faith, using freedom to build unity. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul does not tell the Corinthians that knowledge is bad or that freedom is fake. He tells them that knowledge and freedom must be governed by love. The question is not only, "What do I know?" or "What am I allowed to do?" The question is, "Will this build up the people Christ has placed around me?"

This week, pay attention to how you use your freedom.

- Where are you tempted to defend your rights more quickly than you consider another person's faith?
- What opinion, preference, or freedom might need to be handled with more love?
- Who in your life needs you to think less about what you can do and more about what will help them take steps toward Jesus?

Jesus gave His life for the brother or sister we may be tempted to dismiss. If Christ valued them enough to die for them, then we can value them enough to limit ourselves for their good. Biblical community grows stronger when disciples use freedom to build up rather than tear down.

Let's pray.