DISCUSSION GUIDE

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

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 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.

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?"