

## **Small Group Study Guide**

**“The Weaker Group: Exercises Freedom in Conscience with Love”**  
1 Corinthians 8, 10; Romans 14

**Introduction:** “Is it okay for a Christian to eat meat sacrificed to an idol?” That is the question of the Corinthian church for Paul. Around this question there were two groups in Corinth – the “weaker” group who had no freedom to eat meat sacrificed to an idol and there was the freer group who had freedom of conscience to eat meat sacrificed to an idol. What we share in common with the Corinthian church is not the issue of meat sacrificed to idols, but rather the reality that, like them, we have our own issues that divide us into the “weaker brother” group and the freer group. And so, Paul’s instruction to them on how to handle such spiritually charged issues is right on the money for us today. This week, we will consider this issue from the “weaker brother” perspective and then next week from the freer group perspective.

### **Opening Questions:**

1. As you were growing up what were some of your “weaker brother” issues that you have faced (i.e. cards, dancing, alcohol, etc.)?
2. What are areas that you now sense others have freedom in conscience to do, but you do not? In what ways does this affect you?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 8:4-13; Romans 14:1-2, 14, 22-23**

3. How do these passages describe the weaker brother/sister? In what area(s) does Paul say that the weaker brother/sister is sometimes weak?
4. How would you define the weaker brother/sister?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 6:12**

5. Lowell taught that in Jesus Christ we have been given a new set of questions. Instead of the question, “Is it lawful” it is more appropriate to ask, “Is it profitable? Does it edify? Does it master?” In what ways might these be more helpful questions to use?

6. Lowell said that we need to “respect our conscience.” What does that mean? How do we do that?
7. Lowell made a distinction between trusting our conscience and respecting it. What is the difference between respecting it and trusting it? Why shouldn’t we trust it?

Lowell offered the following prayer for the weaker brother/sister to use:

Dear Father,  
In faith, I believe and say thank you for the many, many freedoms that you have given us in Christ Jesus. But honestly, O Lord, I’m sad, because I don’t seem to experience much of these freedoms at all. My conscience seems oppressive. Father, please expand my freedom. Please re-train my conscience. In the meantime, I also pray these three things:  
1. I thank you for the freedoms that I do have, enough to keep me joyfully busy until the end.  
2. I trust you--that you know what you are doing--and so I intend to respect my conscience and obey You.  
3. Please help me love those who seem to have more freedom than I, that I might not be judgmental.  
In Jesus’ name, Amen

8. What do you like about this prayer?
9. What do you think God would respond to in this prayer?
10. Read Romans 14:3. What does Paul say to the weaker brother/sister in this passage?
11. How can the weaker brother/sister avoid judging him who has freedom and joy in doing things that would be sin for the weaker brother/sister? And, how can he avoid, as Lowell said, not being “grumpy” towards the person who has such freedom?
12. Read Romans 14:19. Discuss how a person in the “weaker brother” position on a particular issue can live out this command? What might it look like?