

Jesus' command, sacrifice yourself for the other persons good, that it benefits them at your expense.

So Paul concludes; "A free meal here and there isn't worth it at the cost of even one of these 'weak ones'. So, never go to these idol-tainted meals if there's any chance it will trip up one of your brothers or sisters." (1 Cor. 8:13)

Paul resolves the dispute by sacrificing himself out of love for the other person. Paul gives up on winning the argument in favour of loving the other person as Jesus loves them.

And Jesus has died for them, I can surely give up a free meal of prime beef.

Is this easy? No. In fact it goes against our old sinful nature. After all if I'm right, I should be allowed to do it.

They're my rights. But Jesus died to his rights, so that we might be right with him. And as his disciple he calls us to live the same way; dying to our rights in favour of putting his love into practice for the other person, so that they'll benefit at the cost of my life, at the cost of my rights.

How are you seeking to resolve the issues in relationships at the present time?

Let us pray.
Jesus let me know your love so that I too love

as you do, that I might have the wisdom to sacrifice myself for the other's good, to your glory. Amen.

29 January 2012

WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

When you have a difference of opinion with someone, how do you resolve it? That is a common life situation. We often have differing views, differing opinions, how do we resolve them?

In Corinth one of the areas of contention was whether to eat meat sacrificed to idols or not. Corinth had temples galore, and much of the meat offered for sale had been part of one of these pagan sacrificial rites. So there was a division of opinion as to whether you compromised your faith or not by eating this meat.

We don't have this same division of opinion in our community, but we do have areas of contention, areas of

divided opinion. How do we go about finding resolution in these contentious issues?

One way is to have a debate. People could put forward their ideas, debating to see who is right. We could even call in experts on the subject to backup various opinions. You could even lookup what the constitution says, and throw in a few Luther quotes.

Does anyone see a problem with this way of resolution?

By it's very nature it is divisive. People take sides. Which is one of the first issues Paul deals with in this letter. We have people following Peter, Paul, Apollos and those who seek to win the debate play their trump card; we follow Christ. But

as Paul points out in the first chapter; Christ isn't divided. There is only one Jesus, so all this divisive debating and politicking doesn't achieve Jesus goal of unity.

How does Paul go about helping these people come to a resolution which maintains the unity we have in Jesus? There's the first step, we're all on the same side in Jesus. There is only one Jesus, there is only one Body of Christ.

Paul brings his readers back to what is central, and that is Jesus, not winning an argument, not being proven right. Which I must admit becomes my focus when I get into a debate; winning the argument, seeing the opinion I hold holding sway. I'm right after

Christ Church Lutheran

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Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

all, so you need to change, or you prove I'm wrong, then I need to change.

What is central? What is my focus, our focus? Jesus.

No opinion loves you. No opinion has died for you. No opinion is returning so you can share life together. People love people. Jesus loves you. It's personal.

So if you ever enter a debate and someone says it's not personal; why are you bothering to argue!!! With Jesus, it's personal. He didn't give an opinion he gave his life. He didn't consult experts, he trusted his Father enough to die. He took you to heart, because you're on the Father's heart. It's personal.

Jesus didn't come to win an argument and be proven right; he came to win you and live right with you, and with

the rest of the Father's family. And Jesus did it by coming personally, investing his life in us, loving us to death.

So the relationship I have with Jesus is central. The love Jesus has for me and the other person is central. It's not how much I know as Paul highlights

Jesus didn't come to argue us into a right relationship

later in this letter; "If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything as plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, 'Jump', and it jumps, but I don't have love, I'm nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-2)

The love Paul is talking about is the love the Father has for us through his Son. The Father chose to love us by sending his Son to die as the sacrifice for sin, so that we could live as a child he loves and is proud of. Jesus chose to love us by sacrificing himself, even though he was

100% right and we were 100% wrong, because we needed to be saved. Jesus chose to sacrifice himself, dying on the cross, so that

we might live in the joy of the forgiving love of God.

Jesus didn't come to argue us into a right relationship.

Have you ever noticed that you can't argue your way into a healthy relationship? You can love your way into a healthy relationship; as you sacrificially give of yourself for the other person's good, so that they benefit at your expense. You can love

your way into a healthy relationship by being open and honest with each other; not to win an argument but to be vulnerable, to be naked with each other. That's how you build trust; by being vulnerable as you're open and honest about what's on your heart, how you feel, why you're angry.

Why I'm angry is often a hard one because often I'm not honest with myself. I fall for the old trap of blaming others, that's why I'm angry. If you'd only done the right thing I wouldn't have to get angry. Have you ever had a similar thought? The truth is I choose to get angry. And often I choose to get angry because that's one way I can get my way! I'm not always honest with myself about why I'm getting angry. Sometimes it's got nothing to do with the situation; I'm wounded, I'm hurting, and so I let fly at some poor

unsuspecting person. Why do you get angry? What do you choose to get angry about and how do you choose to show that anger? What makes Jesus angry? Is it the same as what makes you angry?

Paul here moves from a debate about food, to loving people as they

Jesus said; 'Love One Another'

are loved by Jesus. Jesus didn't come to win a debate about food, but to win you that together you could enjoy the food he gives in celebration.

What is Holy Communion? A time we get together with Jesus around food and celebrate the love we have for each other. And that celebration is based on Jesus amazing love of us, which we reciprocate by loving the people next to us.

What is to be the distinguishing mark of Jesus' disciples? How well they argue with each other?

Maybe that's true; because when we have a divisive issue we resolve it by loving each other according to Jesus sacrificial love.

We don't seek to win an argument, but to live out Jesus sacrificial love into this relationship. I love the person more than my right answer.

Jesus said; "A new command I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34,35)

The people in Corinth we're devouring each other to be proven right about what sort of meat you should eat. Paul reminded them of