**A LOVE THAT BUILDS UP**

**ROMANS 14:13-23**

*“13 Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. 15 For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy, by what you eat, someone for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval.*

*19 So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another. 20 Do not tear down God’s work because of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make someone fall by what he eats. 21 It is a good thing not to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. 22* *Whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. 23 But whoever doubts stands condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith, and everything that is not from faith is sin.”* (Romans 14:13-23)

**THE BIG IDEA: Our faith in Jesus should bind us together in such a way that it leads us to love one another in spite of our differences.**

* **If we aren’t careful, we will believe that freedom in Christ was given to us for us to pursue our own personal desires and live as we please with no accountability.**

**OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST SHOULD LEAD US TO:**

**PRACTICE WISDOM**

* *“13 Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister.”* (Romans 14:13)
* **Spiritual maturity is displayed when we avoid creating unnecessary stumbling blocks for the sake of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ.**
* *“Whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves.”* (Romans 14:22)
* **If it doesn’t serve a Gospel purpose and honor Jesus, then we exercise wisdom by keeping it to ourselves.**

**OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST SHOULD LEAD US TO:**

**PRIORITIZE OTHERS**

* *“For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy, by what you eat, someone for whom Christ died.”* (Romans 14:15)
* **Following Christ is a call to place others before yourself for the sake of the Gospel.**
* *“Do not tear down God’s work because of food.”* (Romans 14:20a)
* **The very nature of true followers of Christ is denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Jesus for the sake of the Gospel. (See Matthew 16:24)**

**OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST SHOULD LEAD US TO:**

**PROMOTE PEACE**

* *“So then, let us pursue what promotes peace…”* (Romans 14:19a)
* **In a culture that promotes “Me-ism” and attaining our personal happiness at all costs, Christians must rise above the cultural norms to demonstrate Christ’s love to the world.**

**OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST SHOULD LEAD US TO:**

**PRODUCE GROWTH**

* *“So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.”* (Romans 14:19)
* **Every Christian has been given the mandate to make disciples. (See Matthew 28:19-20)**
* *“No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. 30 And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You were sealed by Him for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. 32 And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.*
* **God’s people should be known for being “builders of others” rather than “destroyers of others.”**