

All To the Glory of God

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[0 : 0 0] reading today comes from 1st Corinthians chapter 10 verse 23 going all the way to chapter 11 verse 1 and if you're using one of our blue pew bibles it's on page 958 i'll give you a moment to find it page 958 in your pew bibles 1st Corinthians 10 23 to 11 1 let me pray for the reading and preaching of god's word heavenly father we pray that you will now address us from your word let all that is of you land on our hearts with force the power of the spirit and let all that is not of you fade recede into the background and not be uttered lord from this pulpit and we pray lord that as we are addressed by you we will draw closer to you that we'll become more like you grow as a church to be able to glorify you in all things and to work for the good of our neighbors as your people so meet with us in jesus name we pray amen 1st corinthians 10 23 to 11 1 all things are lawful but not all things are helpful all things are lawful but not all things build up let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor eat whatever is sold in the market without raising any question on the ground of conscience for the earth is the lord's and the fullness thereof if one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience but if someone says to you this has been offered in sacrifice then do not eat it for the sake of the one who informed you and for the sake of conscience i do not mean your conscience but his for why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience if i partake with thankfulness why am i denounced because of that for which i give thanks so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do do all to the glory of god give no offense to jews or to greeks or to the church of god just as i try to please everyone in everything i do not seeking my own advantage but that of many that they may be saved be imitators of me as i am of christ the word of the lord thanks be to god we all consider a variety of factors when making decisions sometimes our decisions are deliberate and logical sometimes they are spontaneous and intuitive sometimes we think that they are deliberate and logical but they are more intuitive and subconscious than we know usually they are a mix of both and sometimes we make altruistic decisions and sometimes we make selfish decisions that advance our own agendas but in all that we do there are a couple overarching principles that must govern all of our habits and all of our decisions as christians and in first 10 23 to 11 one apostle paul teaches us that we are to imitate christ and do all things to the glory of god and the good of our neighbors that's the main point of this passage and i will talk about that in two parts the first part of the sermon will be covering verses 23 to 30 about the good of our neighbors in the second part we'll talk about the glory of god from chapter 10 31 to 11 one paul begins in verse 23 by quoting the often used slogan of the corinthians which we've seen before in this uh letter all things are lawful right we saw that earlier in

chapter 6 when the corinthians were using that slogan to justify sexual immorality so they mistakenly believed that because of their newfound spiritual freedom in christ that they now all things were permissible for them lawful for them to do so on the surface that sounds similar to paul's own teaching he says in galatians 5 18 that christians who are led by the spirit are not under the law so we no longer have the the binding force of the law on us with its penalties that are threatened against us that's no longer on us because christ has fulfilled the law but that's still a distortion of paul's teaching to say that because of christ now i can do all things all things are lawful for me because paul also says specifically in romans 6 14 to 16 for sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace what then are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace by no means do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves you are slaves of the one whom you obey either of sin which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness so while it is true that those who are in christ because christ fulfilled the law perfectly on our behalf are no longer under the law in terms of its legal and penal demands this did not mean that we could go on sinning as christians because to do so would mean that we are still enslaved to sin when christ died to save us to free us from sin and so this freedom in christ was an opportunity to keep in step with the holy spirit and to follow god not to do whatever we please to be lawless and that's the difference right between a christian between a legalist and a lawless person and a christian the lawless person doesn't want to follow god's law he does not follow it the legalist does not want to follow god's law but he follows it anyway because he has to the christian on the other hand follows the law because he wants to the law of god is written on his heart and the spirit of god enlivens him and leads him and so the mindset really of doing what is lawful is fitting for a pharisee a legalist but woefully inadequate for the christian that's why jesus said in his sermon on the mountain matthew 5 20 i tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the pharisees and the scribes you will never enter the kingdom of heaven sometimes we mistakenly think that these pharisees held to a higher standard than we can keep but the pharisees kept to a lower standard than we can keep and that's why jesus says you unless your righteousness exceeds theirs then you will not enter the kingdom of god because the mindset of a legalist of a pharisee is essentially self-serving and self-preservationist their goal is to pass right their goal is to not mess up to meet the minimum requirement so they can enter the kingdom of heaven that's the mindset of a legalist they're just trying not to disqualify themselves but that's different from the christian's mindset because the christian's mindset is not simply to pass for one's own sake but to please god to honor god to glorify god so by definition a christian is a maximalist and not a minimalist like a pharisee it's the difference between really a student who is trying to do the minimum requirement and pass and graduate and compare that to a straight a student who loves learning i am wants to please the student that's the difference that's the pharisee's righteousness and the christian's righteousness so for paul the corinthian slogan all things are lawful is misleading and inadequate and he qualifies it in verse 23 he says all things are lawful but not all things are helpful sure you might have the right or authority to do such things but that does not mean that such things are helpful or beneficial for paul it's not enough that we can we can do something we need to ask whether we should do something and then paul continues all things are lawful but not all things build up so the christian life is not about claiming our rights but it's about doing things that benefit and build up the church so that means our decision making process and everything that we do should never be purely self-centered

but oriented toward helping and building others up that's paul's first qualification the proper christian attitude is one of service selflessness so and that's why even though it might be lawful for you when you return home from a long day at work to seat yourself on the couch to put your feet up on the table and relax unwind watch tv but i'm sure it will do you i'm sure that will do some good to rest and relax but is that what is most helpful for you in that moment is that helpful to your spouse is that helpful to your children does it build up your children yes it's lawful for you do that but is it helpful yes it's lawful for you to spend hundreds of dollars on that latest gadget or that latest design that came out of your favorite clothing shop and i'm sure it will do you some good because it's beautiful and useful to have those things but is that the most helpful way for you in that time of your life to spend that money does it benefit only you or does it build up others is there a better way you can spend that money everyone in the world looks out naturally for their own interests but christians are called to not only look out for our own interests but also for the interests of others that's why it says in verse 24 let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor this is another way to state the second half of the greatest commandment that jesus taught us you shall love your neighbor as yourself because love is by nature self-giving and self-sacrificing and one of the defining characteristics of love as paul writes later in chapter 13 verse 5 is that it does not insist on its own way we're supposed to look out for the other's interests and it's amazing that we as humans selfishly can even turn the greatest commandment uh to our own end for our own selfish purposes because how many times have you heard this in order to love your neighbor as yourself you need to first love yourself so take care of yourself treat yourself serve yourself then you will know how to love your neighbor as yourself have you heard that before i've heard that before that's pop psychology nonsense that's we know very well how to love ourselves that's taken for granted even the people with the lowest self-esteem in the world they who hate themselves they love themselves in fact it's because precisely because they love themselves so much that they hate with such hatred the things that they don't like about themselves that's why they pity themselves it's because they love themselves that's why the greatest commandment assumes our self-love and then it tells us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves self-love is not the foundation of neighbor love it is the impediment to neighbor love that must be overcome that's why paul says let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor because seeking our own good is often at odds with seeking the good of our neighbor and who is the neighbor whose good we must seek jesus answered this question in luke chapter 10 25 to 37 in the parable of the good samaritan and there even though in that time and age the samaritans and jews hated each other refused to congregate with each other in this story jesus taught the jews who were listening that even a samaritan is a neighbor so that shows us that a neighbor is not someone who has the same ethnic heritage or racial heritage as you it's not someone who was born in the same decade as you part of the same generation it's not someone who has the same academic pedigree as you it's not someone that shares your preferences opinions and interests a neighbor is anyone you come into contact with a neighbor is literally your neighbor the ones you're rubbing shoulders with

and this is so insightful because given the busyness of urban living and the transience of the city that we live in and our relative anonymity in the city because there's so many people it's so easy for us to ignore the neighbors that are immediately within our reach isn't that true many of us have more social interactions with facebook friends that we hardly know and we have never met than our actual neighbors because and because our time and resources and our emotional capacities are all limited we could only really love a handful of people in a tangible way each day so while it is true that we should love everyone the bible is so wise that god jesus is so wise to command us not to just love everyone in general but to say love your neighbor because in trying to love everyone in general we can love no one in particular because loving everyone is so general and abstract and so he says concretely love your neighbor and that's what paul saying paul is saying here let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor do you love your neighbors do you know your neighbors do you make an effort to say hi to your neighbors and introduce yourselves to them because you can say hey uh i see you around quite often but i've never had a chance to introduce myself to you my name is sean what's your name you get to know them talk to them ask them questions how they're doing and once you get to know them and that you're in have enough relational grounds you could ask them to come over for dinner talk to them see what their hopes and fears are and speak the truth of the gospel over that please don't say you don't have time to get to know your neighbors the bible doesn't call this the polite suggestion this is the greatest commandment it's the matter of priority in keeping to our own busy schedules we are being selfish with our time and we are seeking our own good rather than the good of our neighbor that's part of it let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor in verses 25 to 28 paul uses an example to illustrate what this principle looks like in application he writes in verses 25 to 26 eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience for the earth is the lord's and the fullness thereof in paul's day much the meat that was sold in the markets were actually from animals that had been sacrificed at the pagan feasts so for this reason the jews abstained generally from eating meat whose origin they did not know they refused to buy meat from the meat markets however paul says that this should not be an issue for the christian for the conscience of the christian because there is no need to be concerned about eating such food and the reason paul gives for this is psalm 24 1 which he quotes he says the earth is the lord's and the fullness thereof this is the verse that jews often cited to say that whenever you eat something before you eat you should thank god for it because it came ultimately from him he's the origin he's the source so to not acknowledge him and to thank him for it is like defrauding him and not giving him the due that the thanks that is due to him so the jews often use this verse before they ate and paul is not using this for another purpose he's saying that if this is true that the earth is the lord's and the fullness thereof if the whole earth belongs to god and everything that's contained therein then all the animals in the world belong to god and it doesn't matter who butchered it it's ultimately from him and so you should be able to eat it with a clean conscience it doesn't matter that people in their ignorance had offered these animals as sacrifice to idols these idols are nothing at all and since god alone is creator

all that is part of creation belongs to him so believers should partake and freely eat the meat as gifts from the lord now some of you might be thinking about our previous passage and raising some questions because this case is a bit different from what paul just addressed earlier in chapter 10 because in the first part of chapter 10 he instructed the corinthian believers not to participate in the pagan festivals and to eat the meat that's sacrificed there so the difference here is that those those people in the first case people are actually going to and participating in the sacrifices and in the pagan feasts therefore partaking what is essentially worship of demons in idolatry and so paul says don't do that don't participate however in this case he's not talking about being at the feast but rather buying meat from the market and the meat that had come from a feast but it was sold just at a market he's saying for those things it's fine to consume so this is really helpful actually when you think about christian ethics because it seems that in terms of indirect and secondary and tertiary association with the sins of this world the bible seems to afford considerable liberty to the christian he's saying no that's not an issue as long as you're not directly participating in the feast you can eat that meat so that's why paul says in verse 27 if one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience so paul recognizes it as a distinct possibility that christians might be invited to unbelievers houses for dinner he says that if they are disposed to go that they should and not only are they free to join unbelievers for a meal uh he expects that in the likely event that a meat that is served in that in that setting is a meat that had been formally purchased purchased from the market that was sacrificed to an idol he said there's no need to care about its origins you can just eat it with a clear conscience this is quite liberal uh for paul's day uh it's hard to uh um grasp how difficult this would have been for for the jews the christian jews at the time because around this time the jewish manual called the jubilees book of jubilees which is from about the first century bc uh it says this chapter 22 verse 16 separate yourself from the gentiles and do not eat with them and do not perform deeds like theirs and do not become associates of theirs because their deeds are defiled and all of their ways are contaminated and despicable and abominable that's crystal clear right and so and but but for the christian paul says it's okay and here's the reason if you look at acts 10 you see an actual example of this principle being applied by jews and because in the god shows a peter apostle peter a vision of of unclean all kinds of unclean ceremonially unclean animals uh being lowered on a sheet uh and then he tells peter kill and eat and peter of course being the observant jew that he is he responds by no means lord for i have never eaten anything that is common or unclean but then god says to him what god has made clean do not call common the purpose of that vision was to show peter that god has made the gentiles clean and that his salvation plan is not just for the jews no longer just for the jews but includes all the nations of earth and because he had been prepared ahead of time by that vision when cornelius a gentile military commander in the roman army asks him to come and teach him and his household about god peter accepts the invitation to go to his house and when he gets there this is what he says he says you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation but god has shown me that i should not call any person common or unclean so when i was sent for i came without objection and then peter preaches the gospel to them the holy spirit falls on the gentiles and they are all baptized as a result so in the old testament right the primary

[20 : 14] concern the religious concern of the old testament was to preserve israel's integrity and their religious purity and the reason for that was because they were the nation the people from whom jesus christ the savior of the world would come for this reason non-jews could be saved only by joining the jews becoming a jew by being a part of the nation of israel but that was only the half of the promise that god had given to abraham god promised abraham that he would be made into a great nation but he also said in genesis 12 in abraham all the families of the earth shall be blessed salvation is from the jews but it is not exclusively for the jews and so after christ comes to save his people and after his death and resurrection he instructs his disciples then to go and make disciples of all nations that's what happened when christ came and that's why paul's posture toward gentiles is radically different from the posture that his fellow jews had in his day and so he's able to say if one of the unbeliever invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience do you eat with unbelievers when you share a home-cooked meal with someone you're going beyond a mere acquaintance to friendship and paul expects believers to have that kind of table fellowship with unbelievers is there an unbelieving neighbor who knows you and trust you enough to invite you over for dinner as christians we are called to be set apart but not to be separatistic we're called to be distinct from the world but not distant from our neighbors how can we share the gospel with our neighbors if we don't befriend them and if we don't befriend them how can we claim to love them and because love not liberty is the basis for christian behavior because we're not supposed to seek our own good but the good of our neighbors paul adds verse 28 read with me verse 28 but if someone says to you this has been offered in sacrifice then do not eat it for the sake of the one who informed you and for the sake of conscience it's not exactly clear of who this someone might be some people assume that because paul had mentioned in the previous chapters a christian brother who has a weaker conscience for whom you need to you need to whose conscience you need to guard he thinks that some some people think that another fellow believer with a weaker conscience was invited along with you and they object saying oh this is sacrifice this was the meat that was sacrificed to idols so i there's a couple reasons why i don't think that's likely first is that it says this has been offered in sacrifice a more literal translation of that is this is sacrifice meat there's a specific word that means sacrifice meat and that's a word that the pagans used unbelievers used to refer to meat that was sacrificed in pagan worship sacrifice meat the jews and christians had another word for the exact same type of meat they called it idol meat and so the fact that this person is saying this is this is sacrifice meat suggests that it's likely to be an unbeliever who is informing the christian and then secondly not only is a fellow christian that is coming with the weaker conscience not even mentioned in this context it's unlikely that a fellow guest along with you would along with this person would know the sacrificial origin of the meat how would they know this meat came from the the sacrifice was sacrificed to the to the idols they wouldn't know i mean it's not like they mark it with the stamp right so it's it's it only makes sense that this is probably the host the unbelieving host who is saying that this meat was sacrificed to idols then at this point of course we could ask uh why uh uh why is the host would inform the christian of such a thing that this is sacrificed meat and it seems to me like much like a host you know when you go over to someone's house a host can uh realize that he cooked food with nuts in it and and realize that you know someone might be allergic to nuts and so he said hey this has nuts in it by the way as a way of a service as a way of courtesy informing the guests in a similar way it seems that this gentile who has invited a christian over for

dinner has prepared meat like he normally does from the meat purchase from the market it's meat that will sacrifice the idols but then he realized that as a christian the christian might have an objection to it because this was maybe he thinks that to eat such a meat is to partake in idolatry and the worship that was part of the meat sacrifice so for the sake of christian this unbeliever says do not eat it i mean so he says this is sacrificed meat and in such a case paul says do not eat it for the sake of the one who informed you and for the sake of conscience because the unbeliever thinks that to eat that for the christian would be to condone idolatry or to partake in it and note that paul doesn't say hey in that context if they serve you serve it to you just explain to them that it's not idolatry he doesn't say that right because maybe that's not the best context to explain it to them and how can you be guaranteed that they will believe what you say or be convinced of it do you know where they are in their conscience right now they think that it's inappropriate for you to eat it as a christian so don't use your liberty to eat it abstain from it for the sake of the person who informed you because this might prove to be a stumbling block they might think that idolatry is okay and not come to know the lord we are to do all things for the good of our neighbors that's the first principle but what exactly is the good of our neighbors who defines this good that first principle can't stand alone and that's why we turn to the second point the glory of god in verse 31 he teaches us a second and more fundamental principle that's supposed to govern and ground our first principle so he writes this follow with me verse 31 so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do do all to the glory of god so paul mentions eating and drinking specifically because that fits the illustration that he just used but and and uh but the principle applies beyond eating and drinking of course that's why he adds the phrase whatever you do this principle this principle is pervasive it concerns everything that we do whatever we do from the slightest thing to the weightiest thing from the smallest to the biggest from the most trivial to the most important everything in our lives is to be done to the glory of god even insignificant details like what you eat and drink must be made to the service of the glory of god that these are what is the glory of god exodus 33 18 19 when mooses asks god please show me your glory god answers i will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name the lord so god's glory is a manifestation of god's goodness it is the manifestation of god's character and attributes the glory of god is the display of divinity therefore it's unique to god it's what makes god god so then to glorify god that means to acknowledge who he is to ascribe glory that is already his to him that's why psalm 29 2 says ascribe to the lord the glory do his name worship the lord in the splendor of holiness it's not something that we give to him that he doesn't have it's something that we ascribe to him because it's due to him it's owed to him it already belongs to him that's what it means to glorify him and so isaiah 43 and and that's what we're created to do as people we are created to glorify god to ascribe to him glory so isaiah 43 7 says everyone who is called by my name whom i created for my glory whom i formed and made god created each of us uniquely like a facet of a prism and when the light of god's glory shines on it we are supposed to reflect the light of the glory of god and in all its glorious colors that's humanity's purpose that's the reason you are alive that's the meaning of our lives so eat to the glory of god

read to the glory of god bleed to the glory of god please bogate to the glory of god read to the glory of godiec to the glory of god babysit to the glory of god sell and buy to the glory of god teach to the glory of god cook to the glory of god change diapers to the glory of god talk to the glory of God. Listen to the glory of God.

Tweet to the glory of God. Everything we think, everything we feel, everything we say, everything we do should be for the singular purpose of glorifying God.

And there's such freedom in living that way. It simplifies your life. It's important that we get this because without seeking the glory of God first, we will not know how to seek the good of our neighbors.

[29 : 23] Those two things go hand in hand. That's why the greatest commandment has two parts. First, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And then to love your neighbor as yourself. Love for God is the reason behind one's love for our neighbor.

And one's love for neighbor is a necessary expression of our love for God. And that's why he says here, in order to seek the good of our neighbors, we need to seek the glory of God. Now, if we don't hold those two things together, we will misunderstand verses 32 to 33.

Read that with me. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

That can be misinterpreted if you're merely thinking about the good of our neighbor without thinking about the glory of God. Because Paul's not saying here that we should sacrifice our Christian convictions in order to please our neighbors.

We live among people whose sensibilities are frequently offended, whose feelings are easily hurt. And Paul's not saying that we shouldn't ever say or do anything to offend anyone in that kind of superficial sense.

[30 : 29] The gospel of Jesus Christ itself teaches us that we are sinners in need of a Savior and that truth alone is offensive to the vast majority of unbelievers. If we are so concerned about not offending them, then we would never share the gospel with them.

That's not what Paul is talking about. Our neighbors have all kinds of wrong ideas about what is true and just and right, and it would be sinful for us to compromise our convictions. That's not what Paul is talking about.

The word give offense here literally means give no cause for stumbling. It's the negative form of the word that Paul used a stumbling block in chapter 8 verse 9 where he said, But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

So it means when he says give no cause for stumbling, when he says give no offense to anyone, he means don't put up any unnecessary obstacles to people coming to Christ. Don't make them stumble in their pathway, in their way to Christ. That's what Paul means by give no offense. And this is confirmed by the purpose clause at the end of verse 33.

33, what is the purpose for which we should give no offense to anyone? That they may be saved. That's the goal. That's the driving purpose of not giving offense is that they may be saved.

[31 : 44] So Paul's really kind of reiterating what he already said in chapter 9, 20 to 22 where he said, to the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews, to those under the law I became as one under the law though not being myself under the law, that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law, not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I become all things to all people that by all means I might save some. Paul's not trying to please people for the sake of pleasing people. He's trying to please people for the sake of pleasing God, for the sake of saving them. That's why in another context in Galatians, Paul says, like, I'm not seeking the approval of man. He says, am I trying to please man?

If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. That's what Paul says in Galatians 1. This is not a contradiction. So if you're a people pleaser and you avoid confrontations like a plague, so much so that you would never dare to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with anyone lest you offend them, then you're definitely not pleasing people as Paul is talking about. He said that he was not seeking his own interest, own advantage, but that of many that they may be saved. People pleaser, on the other hand, are seeking their own interest and their own advantage so that they could be thought well of, so that they could be not thought of as foolish, so they could avoid being embarrassed. That's self-seeking.

To interpret these verses in that way, to try not to be afraid of offending anyone in the possible order, to try to please them in that sense, that's a total distortion of what Paul's teaching in this passage. That's self-serving cowardice, not self-sacrificing courage, which is what Paul's calling us to. So the ultimate good of our neighbors, because we see it in the context of the glory of God, is their salvation. Trying to please everyone in everything, everyone in everything one does, that parallels doing all to the glory of God. Doing all to the glory of God parallels doing everything for everyone to please them. And note the categorical nature of Paul's statement. He doesn't say that he tries to please some people in some things. He says he tries to please everyone in everything so that he might save them. Do you make your everyday decisions with the salvation of your neighbors in mind? Do you do everything that is within your power to do it for everyone that is in your life? When you decide where you're going for dinner, who you invite to your house, which community events to attend, where to send your kids to school, where to go to school, do you have the salvation of your neighbors in mind? Or do you have only your interest in mind? Are you content with being on friendly terms with your neighbors without ever sharing the saving use of Jesus Christ with them?

Sure, you might be seeking their good in some smaller ways, but are you seeking their ultimate good? Are you seeking to save them? What would it look like then for us to try to please everyone in everything? Not seeking our own advantage, but that of many that they may be saved. So this is a little bit hard to apply, right? Because Paul's talking about meat, sacrificed meat that's being sold in the marketplace. He says, I will go to an unbeliever's house and eat it, but if they mention that it was sacrificed to idols for his conscience sake, I will refrain from eating it. So that's what Paul, that's the principle that Paul's teaching us. How does this apply to us? Maybe some of your coworkers invite you to work social at a local bar. You can go and enjoy yourself and drink in moderation, right? And that's a great opportunity to share the gospel with them.

There's nothing inherently sinful about drinking. And as long as you stay sober and as long as you're not leading any other weak believer with the weaker conscience into sin by doing so, the Christian has the liberty to do so. Like Paul, we can go over to an unbeliever's house and eat his meat with a clear conscience. For another example, many of our neighbors in Cambridge and greater Boston area are very environmentally conscious. And you might have a neighbor who is very mindful of her own carbon footprint, and she might think that using styrofoam cups is destroying our environment.

[36 : 30] I have a lot of neighbors who think that way, so this is not just a hypothetical situation. And so this might be a non-issue for you. You might agree with her, you might not. Maybe you're aware that if foam cups are recycled, which you can't do through the Massachusetts system, but you can by taking it to recycling companies like RefoamIt in Newton. If you actually recycle it, it has a much less, it's much better in terms of carbon footprint than actual paper cups. So maybe you're aware of that and you have freedom with regard to using styrofoam cups. But regardless, because you know of your neighbor's convictions and his or her conscience sake, for the sake of your neighbor, you choose not to put that stumbling block when you have that person over to your house for a party and have styrofoam cups sitting on that table. I know that seems like a really small thing, right? But eating meat, sacrificed idol, was a very small thing for Apostle Paul. It doesn't matter. I could eat that whenever I want, Paul said, but for the sake of that person, I will not eat it. If it's an important issue for your neighbor, it's an important issue for you for the sake of removing the stumbling block. Or maybe your unbelieving neighbor invites you to a TV viewing party, but because he knows you're a Christian, he warns you, just so you know, there's a lot of graphic and gratuitous sex and violence in this show.

Now, there are a lot of good biblical reasons not to watch a TV show that has a lot of graphic and gratuitous sex and violence. So this may not be something that you could do with a clear conscience anyway. But let's imagine that you can. You're one of those people who are not affected by these things, or you're at least convinced that you're not affected by these things, and you don't think that it's sinful to watch it. Even if you have the liberty regarding an issue, because your neighbor has warned you for the sake of your conscience, not for your conscience' sake, for the sake of his conscience, so you don't put a stumbling block in front of him by showing that person that it's okay for Christians to participate in gratuitous sex and violence, so you don't put a stumbling block in front of your neighbor, refrain from going to the party, and use that opportunity to say no as an opportunity to share the gospel and the hope that you have in Christ. If we're honest with ourselves, it was really hard to come up with examples that might be relevant to you, but you could probably think of more in your life as things come up as you relate to your neighbors. But if we're honest with ourselves, we don't do this perfectly, and we are to do all things to the glory of God and the good of our neighbors, but often we do things for our own glory and our own good. And that's where the chief problem of humanity lies. Human beings are by default glory thieves. We steal the glory that is due to God and live to glorify ourselves. We're like that brat that goes to a friend's birthday party and then makes the party all about himself. Even though all indications, the signs on the walls, the name written on the cake, all the gifts, everything points to the fact that it's your friend's birthday, but that brat must make that party all about himself. That's us in this world with all creation pointing to the glory of God, saying that it was all created for him, and we want to make it all about us live for our own glory. Or we're like that rude conference attendee who during the Q&A; session after the talk, instead of asking a question like he's supposed to, gives a 10-minute monologue as if he were the expert on subject and the speaker of the topic. We're vain. We have illusions of grandeur, and we live like we are unimpressed with and unaware of God's presence. We ought to be learning from him and submitting to him, but we presume to teach God and make him fit our narrow and erroneous view of life.

That's why Romans 3.23, which we read from, says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Instead of doing all things to the glory of God, we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And because of that, we can't do all things for the good of our neighbors either. I used that analogy of the prism earlier, that we're supposed to reflect the glory of God in our unique way in which God created us. But instead of reflecting and displaying the light of God's glory, we have become chipped and clouded prisms that distort the light of God's glory, that block it and not let it through. That's the biggest problem facing humanity, the sin that separates us from God. And if you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ, please pay attention to this. Until you deal with this issue, until you make this right, your life will always feel off kilter. You will feel like a misshapen puzzle piece that you're unable to make fit into the grand scheme of God's plan for your life and for this world.

You will be successful and accomplished without feeling fulfilled. You will be wealthy and well-fed, but you will feel empty. You will have many friends and admirers yet feel lonely and not fully known.

You will be recognized and esteemed yet feel like an imposter and a hypocrite. That's because you're not fulfilling the purpose for which you were created.

[42 : 14] Your life needs to be realigned and reordered according to God's will for you. But none of you can make this right in your own strength. We can't restore our relationship with God on our own, and that's why God the Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to save us. In 2 Corinthians 4, 4-6, Paul writes that what saves us is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. And later in the same chapter, he writes, God has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. How do we get restored to that place where we're giving glory to God? How do we get restored to that place where we are doing all things to his glory? And we're no longer falling short of the glory of God. It's the gospel of the glory of Christ.

It's by looking into the face of Jesus Christ who came to save us, though we fell short of God's glory. Christ was the perfect embodiment of God's glory. And even though he alone deserved that glory, he didn't glorify himself, he humbled himself, even to the point of dying on the cross for our sins, so that we can share in his glory.

Paul told us to try to please everyone that they might be saved. That's what Christ did for us. Romans 15, 1-3 tells us what Christ did. He says, we who are a strong have an obligation to pair with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up. For Christ did not please himself. But as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. Christ traded his glory for our reproach. Christ deserved honor. He deserved praise. He deserved glory.

Christ should not have been reproached. Christ had every right to please himself. But he chose not to please himself. To please, to please, to please his father. To please us.

To save us. And that's why Paul closes this section with chapter 11, verse 1. Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

[44 : 53] Christ, in his self-giving love, became the paradigm by which all of us are supposed to live. So, before we have a moment of silence to reflect on this, let me ask you some questions.

What rights can you give up for the sake of your neighbors? What condenses can you give up for their sake? In what ways have you been living for your own glory?

How can you reform your life? So that you can live for God's glory. Let's imitate Christ and do all things to the glory of God and the good of our neighbors.

Please take a moment in silence to reflect on this and to respond to this in prayer. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.