What Freedom Looks Like?

(Insights from 1 Corinthians 8-9)
Pastor Bob Johnson, Grace Point Church, November 22nd, 2015

Paul's Framework for Freedom: 1 Cor. 8 (Matthew 22:36-40, 1 Timothy 1:5-7, 1 John 2:3-6, 4:19-5:3)

- One Big Idea: Value Love over ...
- Two Boundaries To Our Behavior:
 - Love for God Consider His ...
 - Love for Others Consider Their ...
- Three Different Responses:
 - to the 'Stronger' ...
 - to the 'Weaker' ...
 - to the 'Enforcer' ...

Paul's Example of Freedom: 1 Cor. 9

 Personal sacrifice > Personal rights ("Who can I help?" vs "What can I have?")

Paul's Passion for Others:

For people to ...

(Romans 1:16, Matthew 4:19, Matthew 28:19-20)

This Week's Discussion Guide:

This is the last week of our small group meetings this quarter! For several months, we have been meeting together to encourage each other and learn together what it looks like to be a more committed Christ follower. As we meet one more time before our Holiday Break, let's ask God to continue to use our small group to strengthen us as we seek to grow.

Getting Started:

Last Sunday's message from our study of 1 Corinthians focused on 'limiting our freedoms' in order to better love others. Each of us grew up along the continuum of 'legalism and liberty'.

When you were young, where did your family tend to land on the continuum below? How does this compare with your current family?

Legalism <-----> Excess Liberty (strict boundaries) (no boundaries)

Last Sunday, we saw how Paul had a passion to see others become Christ followers and experience the forgiveness and fulfillment that comes with that relationship. As you think of people who have influenced your desire to be a Christ follower, what things did they do that you appreciated?

Can you think of anything that people did that had a negative impact on you?

Digging Deeper:

1. In 1 Corinthians 8, Pauls describes some Christians as stronger and some as weaker. How do the following verses describe the attitude and actions of a 'strong Christian'?

Romans 14:19-21 and Romans 15:1-3

Let's suppose you are about to see an R-rated movie, or order an alcoholic drink, or (fill in the blank with something that better applies to you), and a friend showed up who you know has struggled in this area in the past. How could you apply the principles in these verses to that situation?

What would your response be if you knew your friend didn't struggle with this area, but had strong opinions about you and others not being involved in it?

2. We saw in 1 Corinthians 9 how far Paul was willing to go to reach people with the Gospel. His willingness was based on his understanding that people are spiritually lost without Christ. What do we learn about Jesus' attitude about lost people in Matthew 9:35-38?

Read Luke 15:1-10. In this passage, Jesus tells two stories which give us perspective on how God views people who are spiritually lost. As you compare the two stories, what do you notice about spiritually lost people and God's attitude toward them?

What does Luke 19:10 add to your understanding of God's attitude?

3. In the previous question, we looked at the spiritual condition of people who don't know Jesus. In our society, many people consider it to be politically incorrect to say that Jesus is the only solution to the 'lostness' of people who don't have a relationship with Him. How might your coworkers respond if they read the following verses?

John 11:25-26, John 14:6

How can 2 Timothy 2:24-26 help us understand how to share these truths about Jesus with people in a way that is loving?

WRAPPING UP ...

Reflecting on what we studied and discussed based on last Sunday's message, is there a 'grey area' Bob talked about (or one of your own) that you've struggled with by being either too legalistic or allowing yourself too much liberty?

Is there anything related to this struggle that others can pray for you about?

Looking back to this study and looking ahead to the Christmas season, does anyone come to mind that you would like to impact spiritually in taking a step closer to Jesus?

If so, can you think of anything you could do or say that might help that happen? One opportunity for all of us is stepping out of our comfort zone and inviting those we know to our upcoming Christmas Series starting December 6th and especially to our Christmas Eve services.

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Before you wrap up, take a few minutes to share with one another how you benefited from being part of this small group for the past few months. Be sure to pray for each other during the break!