

Message #37**I Corinthians 10:23-11:1**

There is a portrayal; there is a performance that everyone who claims to know Jesus Christ has been commanded by God to give. We have been commanded to imitate and mimic Jesus Christ.

This is not an easy portrayal and it is not an easy assignment; in fact, it is the hardest, highest, most challenging, most rewarding life performance that one can undertake.

The problem with the carnal Corinthian church was that the believers in that church were looking more like the world than they were like Jesus Christ. The Corinthians were emulating those who were not right with God rather than a man like Paul who was right with God.

BELIEVERS ARE TO CONTINUALLY IMITATE JESUS CHRIST BY MAINTAINING A LIFESTYLE THAT CAN BE USED BY GOD TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE ALL TYPES OF PEOPLE INTO A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

Paul specifically points out six factors that will govern the life of a Christ-imitating believer:

GOVERNING FACTOR #1 – Christ-imitating believers WILL NOT do things just because it is lawful. **10:23**

Two times in this verse Paul stresses the fact that the character and quality of ALL types of things are lawful for a believer. What Paul is referring to are things not classified as sinful. Sinful things are NEVER lawful for any believer.

The Christ-imitating believer will ask at least two questions when faced with things lawful:

Question #1 - Is it profitable? **10:23a**

The word “profitable” indicates that the Christ-imitating believer will ask whether or not there is any advantage to the action prior to indulging.

Question #2 - Will this edify? **10:23b**

Another question the Christ-imitating believer will ask is whether or not this activity will help build up another person. The moment we harm another person’s spiritual life is the moment we sin against God (I Cor. 8:12).

GOVERNING FACTOR #2 – Christ-imitating believers WILL NOT do things just because it is lawful. **10:23**

No believer has any Biblical right to isolate himself or herself or to hoard for himself or herself.

The word “neighbor” is an intriguing word for it literally is a Greek word that refers to another of a different kind (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 183).

Quite frankly, we have the responsibility to look out for even the well-being of those who aren't saved, who aren't believers.

GOVERNING FACTOR #3 – Christ-imitating believers WILL NOT just seek their own well-being, but the well-being of others. **10:25-29**

You will notice that four times in these five verses the word “conscience” appears. The Greek word refers to one's innate discerning ability; one's self-judging consciousness (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 247).

We know from Scripture that a conscience can determine a person's liberty (Rom. 14:20-21). We also know that a conscience can determine what is sinful (Rom. 14:23).

There are three basic Pauline principles involved in using your conscience to guide you:

(Principle #1) - If your conscience DOES NOT condemn you, you DO have liberty to partake (Rom. 14:20-21).

(Principle #2) - If your conscience DOES condemn you, you DO NOT have liberty to partake (Rom. 14:23). In fact, one would be sinning.

(Principle #3) - If another's conscience DOES condemn you, you DO NOT have liberty to partake (I Cor. 10:25-29).

Guideline #1 - Don't ask questions that can offend your own conscience. **10:25-26**

The moment you ask whether or not it was sacrificed to an idol is the moment you may offend your own conscience.

Guideline #2 - Don't ask questions that can offend your host's conscience. **10:27**

The moment the host answers and says it was sacrificed to an idol, you are faced with a major decision, whether to offend your host and refuse to eat or offend your conscience and eat.

Guideline #3 - Don't do anything that can offend another's conscience. **10:28-30**

(Reason #1) - Because the person will judge you. **10:29b**

(Reason #2) - Because the person will slander you. **10:30b**

GOVERNING FACTOR #4 – Christ-imitating believers WILL do all to the glory of God. **10:31**

Christ-imitating believers and Pauline-imitating believers will ALWAYS ask “Can I glorify God in this act?”

Whatever they do, whatever they eat or drink, Christ-like and Pauline-like imitators will do all to the glory of God.

GOVERNING FACTOR #5 – Christ-imitating believers WILL do their best NOT to offend anyone. **10:32**

Christ-imitating believers will ALWAYS have their share of enemies. Paul said that living godly would bring persecution (II Tim. 3:12). However, Christ-imitating believers will do their best not to offend anyone.

- 1) They will do their best not to offend the lost religious person—the Jew.
- 2) They will do their best not to offend the lost heathen person—the Gentile.
- 3) They will do their best not to offend the Christian person—the Church of God.

That word “offend” means that the Christ-imitating believer will be one who tries to live his life so that he causes no one to stumble, whether Jew, Gentile or Christian.

GOVERNING FACTOR #6 – Christ-imitating believers WILL do their best to win everyone. **10:33**

The proper use of Christian liberty is to use it to reach others for Jesus Christ. Christ-imitating believers ARE NOT self-oriented; they are other-oriented. They are willing to put self last and others first.

Who do you mimic? Who do you imitate? What is your great ambition in life?

For Paul, it was to be like Jesus so he could reach others for the glory of God.