

Lined area for taking notes.

WARM-UP

- Do you like hosting people in your home? Why or why not?
• Have you ever had a long quarrel that resulted from a petty argument? What happened? How was it resolved?
• Have you been in a situation where your opinion was questioned or opposed? Tell us about it.

WORD 1We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. . . . 7Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ROMANS 15:1,2,7

Paul, speaking to the Roman believers, explained that those who were "strong" (or more open-minded) must bear with the weak (those who were more bound by the law) when it came to convictions and beliefs. While there are some things that the Bible definitely calls sin, there are many observances and rituals that developed in our search for God. Not everyone follows these same principles. In Paul's time, the Jewish and Gentile believers would not mingle for this reason. Paul wrote to address this. By welcoming one another's convictions and opinions, we build each other up. How can we be welcoming to others, even with our differences?

1 | Be considerate of others' convictions.

1As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ROMANS 14:1,2

Paul spoke clearly about the differing beliefs that people held in that day. Some respected certain days as holy, while others didn't. Some ate meat and others didn't. But Paul reminded the church *not to quarrel over opinions*. It's the same today; people's convictions differ. But one individual's conviction doesn't have to be another's. In fact, Paul warns that we may be causing those in our church community to stumble by making them violate their own convictions (Romans 14:21). However, we are also told to *speak the truth in love* to each other, to help one another become more Christlike (Ephesians 4:15). Sometimes an action is a personal conviction; other times it is something the Bible calls sin. How should we respond to either?

2 | Do not be judgmental.

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ROMANS 14:4

Paul reminded the church in Rome that the only true Judge is God and *we will all stand before the judgment seat of God* (Romans 14:10). Each person's convictions are between oneself and God (Romans 14:22). If for them that conviction, action, or decision is holy, then it is holy to God. On the other hand, if a person believes that a certain action is sinful, and they still do it, then they have betrayed their convictions and

in their hearts, sinned against God. Only God knows our true motives and so only He is fit to judge. How have you grown in the skill of welcoming the differing opinions of others? What do you do when you find yourself being critical of others? What does Proverbs 16:2 say about our actions?

APPLICATION

- After hearing this lesson, what is one thing that you can begin to do differently to be more welcoming to others?
- We can be a stumbling block to those in our church community by forcing our convictions on them or causing them to violate their own. Pray for God to show you if you have ever been a stumbling block to someone and ask for the grace to seek forgiveness.
- What do you do when you find yourself being critical of others? List two ways you can continue growing in your acceptance of others.

PRAYER

- Thank God for His unending mercy and just judgment. Thank Him for His Church, the body of Christ and our church community.
- Pray that you will be welcoming and not judgmental of others. Pray for God's grace to hold back opinions and instead see others through His eyes.
- Pray for those in your family and community who have not yet experienced the love and mercy of God. Pray that they will know and understand who He is.