

LINKS PLAYERS

DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR DECEMBER 21, 2012

THE TRICK WITH CHRISTMAS

But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. (1 Corinthians 10:28, NIV)

IDON’T KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT CHRISTMAS. Jesus’ people seem to opine as strongly about the day as they do about belly putters.

Those who gladly celebrate Christmas get plenty upset with those retailers who “dismiss Christ” by wishing us *Season’s Greetings* and selling *holiday trees*. It’s a robust defense of the Christ-centered beginnings of the special day.

But there are other Christians who think this holiday should not be celebrated at all. The modern commercialization of Christmas is reason enough, they say. But then there are also the “pagan origins” of such winter celebrations and the symbols that come with them.

Oh, what are we to do?

Perhaps you’ve heard similar arguments about your regular purchasing choices. Some Christian brother will tell you that you should not shop at a certain store because they give a portion of their proceeds to a godless cause. Or a Christian sister will “kindly explain” that drums do not belong in “God’s music.”

Don’t think the apostles didn’t deal with these kinds of arguments. Paul wrote in at least four different letters about “foolish controversies” that detract believers from the first order of their relationships with one another: love.

Paul was no legalist, that’s for sure! He emphasized the freedom that Jesus’ followers have to celebrate—or not celebrate—traditional festivals, and to eat—or not eat—meat offered to idols. Those who recognized this freedom were to exercise it, unless... And the *unless* is big. We are never to exercise our freedoms with insensitive disregard to the consciences of others. If your friend is unwilling to eat at a particular local establishment, then don’t press her to do so. If your family stands against Christmas on religious conscience, then *shush* the stories of your own time around the tree. Have no interest in stirring up discord on subjects that don’t matter.

Opening questions: Anchoring and more

What side do you take on the current arguments about anchored putters? Why do you think we like to argue about questions like this?

The problem with controversies

Read 1 Timothy 1:3-7. Why did Paul tell Timothy to steer clear of controversies? What is the greatest detriment of such argumentative activity?

Read Titus 3:9-11. What word did Paul use in verse 10 to define a controversy lover? How did this lead to his instruction for dealing with such a person?

Freedom and conscience

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. What lines would you say are most pivotal in telling us how we should treat one another when we disagree? Who is to take the lead in giving way during arguments?
