

The Boundaries of Liberty (Video)

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the importance of boundaries within the liberty we have in Christ. It discusses the need to consider how our actions may impact others, focusing on love as the guiding principle. The speaker addresses the significance of self-examination, modesty, and being mindful of causing others to stumble. The message highlights the discipline and responsibility that come with being a Christian, urging a return to the first love for those who have drifted away.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 8:9, Romans 14:13, Acts 3:19, Revelation 2:4, 1 Corinthians 13:2, Romans 14:21, 1 Corinthians 8:11, 1 Corinthians 8:13, 1 Corinthians 8:1, 1 Corinthians 8:7

Topics: "Boundaries in Christ", "Love and Responsibility"

Description

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Transcript

1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 1. It's an interesting topic. The title is The Boundaries of Liberty. The Boundaries of Liberty.

And what do I mean by that? Well, quite frankly, anytime you've been liberated because of what Jesus did on the cross, and we're liberated, we're set free, there is still boundaries to stay within. We can't just do whatever we want, like Paul said, well, I know it's lawful, but is it profitable? Is it wise? Will it lead others astray? So, as I said, I think it was last Sunday or Wednesday night, as a Christian, you can do whatever you want as long as you stay within Genesis and Revelation. That boundary line there.

And this is why so many people are opposed to religion, possibly Christianity, because they think God is going to keep them from having fun. Oh, I'm not gonna have fun. I've gotta do this and do that.

To me, it's not really about following all these rules like you're at school. To me, it's about a relationship where God puts guardrails up over the canyon and say, don't go over this. Just stay within these guardrails.

So to me, there's a lot of freedom in staying within the guardrails. And Paul is going to talk about our liberty. What's interesting about liberty, I should say this.

There's so many topics. I could probably do part two if we want to hit more topics, but a liberty means a Christian can do something. But should they? The issue comes up often of marijuana or medical use.

What alcohol would be another liberty? Those who can't have one now and then, there's that liberty. But many people use liberty as a cloak for vice. It means like a cloak is something they would put on.

So they continue in their addiction, and they say, but I have a liberty. No, liberty has boundaries. There's a framework there.

And Paul's gonna talk about eating meat sacrificed to idols. We don't have to deal with that anymore. But they had to deal with that then, and it has practical application even for us today.

So here we go, are you ready? I heard something this week I had to share with you. It said everyone is a Christian until it gets biblical. That's a good t-shirt.

Isn't that true? I wouldn't say everyone, but most people are a Christian until it gets biblical. In other words, until the rubber meets the road. It's easy to check off Christian on a survey, but when it comes down to applying the principles and living a godly life, that's where the rubber meets the road.

And that's what you really see in America today. You see political parties divided, and you say, how can Christians believe that? How can Christians do that? Well, everyone is a Christian until it gets biblical. What does the Bible say about certain moral issues? So here we go, chapter eight, verse one.

Now concerning things offered to idols. So there must have been questions about things offered to idols. And what, just to give you the backdrop, is they would offer this meat, this food to an idol, and what was not burned in the sacrifice was actually sold in the marketplace.

So it'd be like you going into the store, and I thought about this, it would be kind of weird. You buy this chicken breast from the butcher, and they say, oh, that one, that was just sacrificed to Allah this week. We did it in the back.

Did you have to tell me that? Or it was just sacrificed to devil worship, or what, and you're like, oh, hmm. See, you're conscious now, is aware of something. And it's better not to know certain things sometimes, but now there's a, oh, what'd I do with this? I'm gonna bring this meat home that was sacrificed? But Paul will go on to say, and we're gonna read in just a minute, where he said there's nothing in the food.

There's no idol. There's only one God. So eat the food.

But if it's going to make someone stumble, and they're not going to understand, then Paul said it's better to refrain and not eat at all. So see, it's not self-focus. The Christian walk is others-focused.

How is this going to relate to others? How is it going to, what kind of message is it going to send? For example, we brought up that just a minute ago, alcohol, some people have the liberty with it. But why do so many, why are people posting it all over Facebook? Look at me in this Long Island iced tea. Look at me on this jet ski with a six-pack of Corona.

See, that's flaunting your liberty. That's flaunting it. Well, that's their problem.

Then, no, it's your problem too. Because people say, well, it's not my fault if they stumble. Actually, it's not your fault that they stumble, but if you cause it, then you are, according to God's Word, part in that.

This comes up a lot. I don't know how I came up with the thought of this. But with modesty in attire, women primarily dressing how they dress.

And we used to hear this working with young adults. Like, well, that's not my fault if the guy has a problem. Well, you don't need to show this, that, and this.

You don't need to be the enticement either. So see how it works both ways. There's social responsibility.

So as believers, we look at how we dress, right? You don't want me wearing a midriff. You might get down your way home. That would not look good.

But we concern about how we dress, how we influence others, what people see in us. And that's really what Paul is getting at here. So it's really not about idols.

It's about the heart. And then he goes on to say, we know that we all have knowledge. Meaning we know that there's, as believers, we know that there's no such thing as an idol.

There's no such thing as other gods. We have that knowledge. But then he says something interesting.

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. So to me, unless I'm reading too much into this, Paul is letting them know you have the knowledge. You have the wisdom here.

But you're not loving church or the particular believers he was writing to. It's love that's going to edify and build up. So if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing, yet as he ought to know.

But if anyone loves God, this one is known by him. So again, if it wasn't burned, it was sold in the marketplace. And the Gentile believers were concerned.

So imagine this, you're a Gentile, meaning you're not Jewish. You've been sacrificing to idols all of your life and eating the meat, or possibly not eating the meat, depending on what your belief system is. But now they're Christians, and now they don't want to eat the meat still because it was sacrificed to an idol.

So Paul's saying, listen, there's nothing to worry about. There's no idol. There's nothing there.

But if your conscience, see, this is where we have to be careful. Your conscience should not be the conscience of someone else on gray areas. Well, I can.

Why can't you? Well, because my conscience doesn't let me do that or go down that path. And like the Gentiles here, we too are sensitive to things in our past, aren't we? So if you dealt with something, you dealt with something, now you're a believer, ah, you don't want to kind of go back to that lifestyle where it might be perfectly fine for someone else on gray areas. But there's, and we're kind of sensitive to certain things that happened in our past.

That's what he said here. Be careful. Knowledge without love makes you arrogant.

Knowledge makes us feel important. So he's warning the church. Be careful.

Knowledge puffs up. Knowledge without love makes you arrogant. Do you ever meet those people that are all knowledge and no love? How quick can you get away from them? So you have to have the combination of both.

And I believe personally that this is the second biggest hindrance in the church today is why the church isn't powerful and loving and helping people. This is the second biggest reason or hindrance to the church. It's truth with no love.

Well, what's the first biggest? Well, in my opinion, love with no truth or what you call carnality or compromising, compromising the gospel, not standing up for what is truth. And when you can marry truth and love, that's powerful. That is a Spirit-filled life.

So if you're on the love side and not the truth side, you want to hop in the middle. And if you're on the truth side and no love, you want to repent to that and make sure you're filled with the love of God. Think about this.

Those who think they know it all know very little. That's what he's saying. Because they miss the heart of God, they miss the love of God, and they don't have the knowledge of who God truly is.

Think about that. When love is removed from your heart or you're kind of a cold, callous person, you lack love, you'll miss the heart of God. So you'll go after someone with Scripture, but not Scripture and love.

And that's why so many people often don't see results, don't see fruit, is because they lack love. And that's what Paul is stating clearly here. If a pastor has knowledge, but little love, he will be a failure.

Let me tell you this right up front. And this is probably one of the biggest areas I think God worked in my life from when I first started the church. Had the truth, you know, and the boldness was still there, but that final icing on the cake of love and brokenness, and God just kept, boom, boom, boom, boom.

Let me, okay, you got the truth now, come on, come on, get the love. But there will also be different callings in a church, different callings. And we have to be sensitive to that because we might say, well, for example, Shane's too hard.

My other pastor, he's nice and sweet and gentle over in Lancaster. Well, he's different callings. God fashioned him that way to be that silent, loving voice and just listen.

He gave me a calling like John the Baptist to call the nation back. And so with that comes a fiery passion. And then you take someone like Pastor Abram, wonderful call with evangelism.

Evangelism, and I love evangelism, but that's more his calling. So God brings all these people together. They're actually the, I believe what the Bible talks about, the five-fold ministry in that you have those who are prophetic voices, you have the evangelist voice, you have the pastor teacher, you have the apostolic gifting, meaning church planting to be sent out.

And a healthy church identifies all of those. And here's where we have to be careful because we'll start to critique others. And I have had to repent many times over.

I'll start to put pastors down because they're not bold. Why don't you grow a backbone? Speak the truth. But they're called more towards that gentle shepherding, counseling kind of a pastor.

And we become wrongly judgmental. And that's also what you're seeing in America. Why you're seeing so many Christian leaders, a lot of them are getting political.

And some people say, well, why are they getting political? They shouldn't be doing that. They're a pastor. Well, but if God has called them to make a difference, that's God's calling upon their life.

The Bible doesn't say pastors can't be political. It actually says we need to be biblical. We need to speak the truth.

But then he calls someone else, not in that arena, but then we're so busy critiquing each other and judging each other that we miss. Could it be that God has called people differently for different tasks? What about somebody who's mission oriented? They wake up with missions. They go to bed with missions.

We got to reach the unreachable. We got to, we're going to reach, and they're mission oriented. Well, they're probably going to get frustrated with someone maybe who isn't.

And vice versa, someone with the calling of evangelism is going to be, why aren't we out in Lancaster evangelizing? Well, why are we out in Ethiopia? See, different callings, different gifting. So shoot your arrow wherever God has called you and don't be wrongly judgmental with others. God has uniquely designed us.

If a dad or a mom has knowledge, but little love, they will have rules, but they will damage the relationships. They will teach their kids, but never reach their kids without love because that's where you have to show the affection, the love, the compassion. There's a relationship built.

Those things that are the most important. And that's hard to have in the home because you want to have that truth. You want that firmness, but if you don't have the love, you're going to hurt.

You're going to damage people because it's the love that builds that relationship. Anybody convicted yet? When they blow it, they don't need Scripture pounding them. They need arms holding them.

And I have a feeling most of our kids know the Scriptures pretty well because we've been quoting it and quoting it and telling them. And there comes a time where you say, here's what the Bible says. Here's what my counsel is.

But you have to have the aspect of love as well. And if a person, if you're single, if you have knowledge, but little love, you will have a hard time making and keeping friends or building relationships. It just doesn't happen.

What did Paul say? Or actually he's going to say later on, if you have not love, it profits you. Nothing. It's an amazing passage.

I think it's 1 Corinthians 13, where Paul talks about, or one of the things is 13. He talks about, you can preach, you can give to the poor, you can do ministry, but if you don't have love, that broken heart, what are you doing? You're like, I wish I had some clanging cymbals right now. That's what he said.

You're like a king, king, king, king, king, clanging cymbals. And like, what is that? Because there's no love. It's so important.

So I'm going to give you some boundary signs that you're off track. Are you ready for this? Here's a person who's lacking love. They are not teachable, humble, or gracious.

Not teachable, humble, or gracious. What do you mean by teachable? Well, are you open for constructive criticism? When somebody, how dare somebody tell you you need to improve on something? You're not open for constructive criticism. You got it all dialed in.

It's everybody else that needs work. And it's just unteachable spirit. There's no humility or graciousness.

What about number two? Always looking for opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge. So a person who has knowledge, but not love, is looking for ways to demonstrate that knowledge. So they might want to be a teacher of the word for the wrong reason.

They might go to a study for the wrong reason. They might want to, look at how much I know. Look at how much I know.

But they miss the love. The person who is lacking love, they often lack a vibrant, a vibrant, dare I say it, emotional relationship with God. Now let me clarify.

I'm not into emotionalism. I'm not into being emotional for the sake of emotions. But there is something in the heart of a person filled with love that rejoices during worship, that's excited during worship.

I mean, why do some churches look like a cemetery during worship? Have you been there? That's not coming from a joy-filled heart. Now I know there's preferences, there's difference in styles, and the old hymnites or the contemporary, but there should be an expression in our worship, because worship flows from a loving heart. A person who lacks love does not worship very well.

They're bound with handcuffs. You don't have to raise your hands, I'm not saying that, but there should be just a joy-filled heart. Speak that name.

Speak the name that even the demons tremble. You speak that name of Jesus Christ. That's why there's a big battle.

That's why you can pray every other name under the sun. You can go to city council meetings and say you're an atheist and you wanna pray to the rock. No problem.

You wanna pray to witches, no problem. But when you step up in there and you say in the name of Jesus Christ, they get upset, they wanna remove that name, get rid of that name, why? Because that name shakes the spiritual realm. That name is above all other names.

At the name of Jesus Christ, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord. There is no greater name. There is no equal name.

There is no co-redeemer. It is Christ and Christ alone. You exalt that name.

You preach that name. That name is when you call down heaven and say oh Jesus, save my children. Oh Jesus, save my soul.

Jesus, break this bondage. Oh Christ, if you don't move, we are lost. Jesus, Washington needs you.

Hollywood needs you. Sacramento needs you. Jesus, would you come and bring revival and restoration and renew us again? There's power in that.

You should get excited because there's power in that name. So always remember this. Love is a mark of someone truly filled with God's spirit.

I don't wanna know how much you know. I wanna know how much you care because knowledge will follow. Knowledge is very important but without love, you'll damage your family.

You'll damage your marriage. You'll damage others. And then verse four, therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world and there is no other God but one.

Now this is important because this is what separates Christianity from most religions, monotheism, meaning mono, one, theism, God. There's one God. So we worship one God.

I am, God said, tell Israel, I am one. I am, yeah, there's Elohim. It's a plurality though of, it shows his plural nature.

He reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the triune and the trinity. That's why we teach the trinity because the Bible teaches the trinity. We don't teach three separate gods and we worship three separate gods.

We worship the one true and living God who chose to reveal himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The reason this is so important is because there are many groups out there who think that there are, yeah, JW's, Mormons, different, that all of us can be like God. For example, Jesus quotes Psalms and he said you will be gods but that it's a lower G and Jesus is talking about being magistrates, being rulers, you will rule over certain people where the Mormon doctrine takes that and says that God was once like us and that we will be God someday, ruling our own planet.

Folks, that's heresy. That's heretical. Oh, I can't believe that's mean-spirited.

No, it's true-spirited. I love people enough to tell, think about what you're saying. God was once like Shane Heideleman.

God was once like you and somehow he just evolved into who he is today, ruling the universe, spoke things into existence, commands the sun to stay, commands the moon to set, commands the earth to have everything necessary here for life and God did all that but he used to be a man and we're gonna be like God? That's a good sales pitch but they take the scripture out of context. It has nothing to do with being a God like God and ruling planets. There'll also be, it also teaches you'll be married.

You'll be married, ruling planets with spirit children but Bible says there's no marriage in heaven and so there's so many things that contradict. Many earthly rulers, he's saying here, but they all sit underneath God's sovereignty. Many, many earthly rulers but they all sit under God's authority.

Would someone send this message please to North Korea and China and Russia and Iran? There's one God and they all sit under his sovereignty, under his control and then verse seven, however, there is not everyone, there is not in everyone that knowledge. So he's saying you know that an idol's really not real but others are still shackled to their past. They can't eat the meat that was sacrificed to an idol so there is not in everyone that knowledge for some with consciousness of the idol until now eat it as a thing offered

to an idol and their conscience being weak is defiled.

In other words, they just can't shake this. Have you ever done that where like a Christian can do something but you just can't do it anymore? My conscience, I just can't do that and for me, a big thing out there for many years has been entertainment. How can some people watch certain movies? I have no clue but my conscience, especially when you put on things, you're just like oh, I just feel this but it's interesting.

He said their conscience is being weak. They are weak. What they mean there is it means not mature obviously.

They're not understanding so they don't get it. Their conscience isn't where yours is yet. They're not mature in the faith so don't push it on them and don't do something that's gonna cause them to stumble.

Look at how your brother is perceiving you or sister and you make decisions based on that, the right decisions. And then verse 19, I'm sorry, verse 9 through 13. But be aware lest somehow this liberty of yours, see now Paul is gonna tell the church again, listen, if somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak.

So if you're eating meat sacrificed to an idol and a Christian says, why are they doing that? I don't understand, it doesn't look good. Then he's gonna say you have to withdraw from that. So anything, you can fill in the blank.

If we're doing anything in our life that were if another Christian would see it, go, oh, that doesn't make sense. It's gonna cause someone to stumble. I'll give you an example.

I'm glad I didn't do this but I was thinking about doing it. I could put a big beer right here. Can I do that? I guess, it's a good sermon illustration.

I mean, liberty. Boy, that would make a good point but probably not a good idea, right? So I had a second thoughts on that. Probably not a good idea.

Somebody will see it in my refrigerator in my office, go, oh no. But we have to be careful on the message we send to other people. And when they see us do something, so what you post, let's go back to that, what you post on Facebook.

And I heard Facebook is for old people, now it's Instagram. So whatever you post on Instagram, don't post anything on Snapchat, stay off of that. Whatever you post on Instagram or Facebook, look at what are people going to perceive you.

Boy, with this impeachment stuff and all the, I would love to post stuff, oh my goodness. I would love to tell people my heart but I know that's not gonna look good. I've done before and I'm like, ah, delete it, delete.

Cause it's just, you're not gonna send the right message sometimes. So it's better just to be quiet. So that's what Paul is saying here.

So this is how it applies to us. Is there anything in our homes or in our lives that is a stumbling block to other people? For example, on this topic, we talked about earlier on this issue, let's say of alcohol. Can a person, maybe I'd like to do a whole teaching on this, but can a Christian have a glass of wine or a beer now and then? I mean, yeah, the Bible's not real.

I mean, it allows for that. Now in my opinion, most people don't have just one, they have about three and they have it consistently and they have a problem. But for those who don't, there's a lot that don't either.

They can have a glass of wine every now and then. Should that person, especially if they're a church or in leadership, should that person go sit at a restaurant and order that and somebody else could see them? See, the person could say, well, that's their problem. I have the liberty to do this.

And technically they have the liberty. See why this is interesting? Technically it's lawful. Sure, okay, you could, but it's not beneficial.

Should you do that? Or somebody seeing you do that? So it's about perception. Also, what's in your home? How many alcoholics began in the home? Because parents had. That's where I started.

12 years old. I know right the house in Quartz Hill. And then in 17, 18, my friend's dad's cabinet, wild turkey.

I don't know if that's still around. And then we just put some water in it so he didn't know. Come on, don't act like you've never done any of this stuff.

But see, I guess he has the liberty to do that. And there's, I mean, it would take a while on strong drink, on wine, the alcohol content of wine in Jesus's day, probably about 2%, not what we're seeing here, 12%. Most, even Jews, Orthodox Jews in Israel today add water with it, so it's about 2%.

That's the wine. And then strong drink with something else completely different. But I don't wanna go in that direction here.

The whole point is, what are others going to perceive you as? Is it gonna be awkward or weird or something? And perception. So I wish I could go jogging out in the desert more often and just take my shirt off when it's hot. But I'd be careful, nobody's around, right? Oh, he's a pastor.

But see, I can do that. It's just weird. It's just weird for me.

It's like, oh. Oh. So this interesting, get the images out.

But I did a, I was in Palm Springs, you know, this week for our anniversary and birthday, and I had Madison with me. And I'm a tank top and Madison, it's 100 degrees out. And I did this short little video and I'm like, oh, this turned out great.

And I show Morgan, she's like, oh, but it looks like you don't even have a shirt on. I'm like, oh, that's right, dang it. But perception, you know? Of course we could still release it, but it's a tank top and I had the baby, you know, the baby backpack on.

And it was just, but just be more perceptive, more aware, conscious. There you go. That's what Paul's saying here.

So if there's something, what about that issue of modesty? Isn't that true? As a Christian woman, you should be concerned with how you address. Because your image, you're representing Christ in you. And so when a, because men are visual.

And when a woman begins to flaunt that and becomes immodest, she does have a responsibility to other people on how she dresses as a Christian. The Bible is clear on it. Actually, I'll talk about modesty as we keep going forward.

And Romans 14 says, don't do anything that causes your brother to stumble. So is there anything, what is the stumble? Is it's like somebody's walking and you put a rock in front of their path. You're causing them to stumble.

So let's do this test here. What's in your home? Is there anything that may be, might be a stumbling block for others? And this is why it's even hard for us. So don't feel bad.

But we have to be so careful with what we allow in our homes on the television with kids. Because that can be a form of a stumbling block. If they can just click something and see something ungodly and pornography or dangerous, we have a responsibility to monitor that, not put a stumbling block.

Jesus said it's actually better if a person was never born than to lead a little child astray or to have a millstone hung around your neck and cast into the ocean. Jesus takes this very seriously about leading our little ones astray. Why? Because they are moldable.

They believe anything, don't they? I mean, I tell my kids some things like, how do they believe that? I'm just joking. Really, daddy? Really? Yeah, I can fly. It just happened this morning.

No way, let me see you. Moldable, fashionable. And I should clarify this word here.

Oh, I don't think I kept reading. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols as well? So what can happen is this person begins to compromise and then they begin to compromise in other areas. So example, somebody sees a leader or somebody they look up to having a drink somewhere.

Like, well, yeah, I guess I could too. But they used to have a problem with it. So now that compromise has opened the door again and they're back in bondage.

So it's an area that we need to be sensitive about. So I'm sensitive about what I post a lot of times or even what I say from the pulpit. I remember actually I taught on alcohol.

Oh, it must have been six years now. And just I did, it was a whole sermon on it. And I mentioned how, you know, one now and then to some people, you know, they can, those who know you can't, can't.

And a guy got mad at me because he said that sermon caused him to go back and drinking. And I said, no, there's no, no, no, I did not. You know, you can't have one, so don't.

I'm just clarifying what the Bible said. And he actually said that I caused him to stumble by preaching the Bible says in moderation for those who can't have it in moderation. And it caused him to stumble.

I think he was looking for an excuse personally. And so, but we do need to be careful with what we say and how we conduct ourself. But he said something here.

And because of your knowledge, shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? Now this word perish in the Greek is not dealing with you think of die or go to hell, anything like that. The word actually means to be ruined by sin. So should your brother be ruined by sin from who Christ died because of the

choices you made and because of your influence? You're causing someone to be ruined by sin.

What about all these pastors out there now that are saying, supporting LGBTQ and supporting gay marriage? Yeah, God's word doesn't say anything. They're gonna be held accountable for the words they say. That's why you'll find many times I don't take a very strong stance on things that are not essential.

You take a stance on what is essential. I'm not gonna argue over how old is the universe, how old is the earth or this type of thing or that type of thing, or we get caught up in all these things. So here he goes on to say, do not be ruined by sin or you're gonna cause someone to be ruined by sin.

But when you thus sin against the brethren, see this is a sin. Is that amazing? A person could be not in sin, doing things for God. But if they're causing someone else to stumble, then they're actually in sin.

And maybe I saw it a lot more than some of you, but I went to a fairly, I guess I call it conservative, but kind of liberal church. There was beer at Bible studies. There was beers at get-togethers.

There was beers at a three-year-old's birthday party. I mean, it's just everywhere. It's like, well, we have liberty.

No, be careful. Be careful because you're causing others to fall in an area. That is a sin.

And you wound their weak conscience. You sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat again, lest I make my brother stumble.

So you plant-based advocates, there's your Scripture text. I'm joking, of course. That's highly debatable too, isn't it? Meat, dairy, plant-based, what's the right diet? What's the right food? Both camps go at each other's throats.

But he says, if me doing something is going, what maturity? What maturity? Isn't that hard? Like saying, you know, if this is gonna make a person stumble, I'm not gonna do it. That's mature. That's wisdom.

But most of us say, well, that's their problem. You ain't got that little look. That's why love is so important.

This keeps coming up. So I hope this is helpful. I just don't wanna say it because I've already said enough.

But also in the area of modesty, look about what you post on Facebook and pictures you post. Men or women, I guess. But what is the message that we're sending to others? It should represent Christ in our dress, in our attire, in our... I mean, the stuff we say, the stuff we say.

I mean, you can, you know, belong to a different political party, but some of the stuff that is out there is just, this is coming from Christians? Cussing and cursing and name-calling and it's just terrible. And you have to be careful in this area. You think 2016 was difficult? You didn't see nothing until 2020.

This election is gonna bring out the worst in everybody, trust me. I've got friends in Washington, you know, and it's gonna get bad. It's gonna get ugly.

A lot of illegal things. A lot of backdoor deals and agreements and they just hate this person in office so much that they have to get him out. And I don't care who's in office.

We need to respect the office. You respect that office. And America should be coming together and uniting.

There's differences, I know. But we need to get the truth from the right sources. Not from the fake news who wants to spin everything.

So be careful when you post something. Is it gonna be beneficial? Is it edifying? You know, it's good to put the facts out there. People need to know.

But we have to be cautious in that area. So motivating one to sin is serious. And again, I could go the whole marijuana, alcohol, modesty, lifestyle, the way a person, how you live.

Wanna flaunt maybe certain things in the face of those who don't have much money. You know, always on vacation. Look at my fur coat.

Look at my Ferrari dealership. Or look at my Ferrari and look at, you know, I'm being exaggerating here a little bit. But you don't wanna flaunt things in the face of others as well.

So keep it private, but also examine yourself. If you are to do something that is biblical, I mean, the Bible allows it, but you don't wanna stumble others, keep it private. Number two, is your liberty really a cloak for vice? Because a lot of people use, well, I have liberty, but they're really using it as a cloak to hide their vice, to hide their sin.

And the most famous one is the one on alcohol, where people who struggle, they say, well, look, Paul told Timothy to drink a little. Yeah, a little. One time for a stomach.

Not every night, because you had a hard day. See, but we use Scripture sometimes. So self-examination.

If you're not sure about something, here's what I do. Just don't post it or abstain or don't do it. If you're not sure, because that could be your conscience kind of clicking in, kicking in there to get you to change course.

Here's something we don't like to know, but it's important that we know, the Christian life is a life of physical, mental, and spiritual disciplines. Why is that important? Because many think it's a view Christianity as relaxing and lazy. I can do what I want, there's no boundaries.

But actually, the Bible, it's physical, it's mental, and spiritual disciplines. It's a life of discipline. Yes, you fall off course, you get back on.

You fall, you repent, you give it back to God. But you're at least disciplining your body in these areas. But I wanna go back to love as a closing point here.

Back to love. Have you ever experienced God's love? I don't know who's watching, I don't know who's listening later. I don't know who might be here now.

But I wanna ask that question. Have you experienced God's love? Because an unbeliever will never be a loving person, truly loving, out of a right heart. And that they've never maybe had a love of a father, they've never experienced love before.

But I wanna encourage you to repent and believe in God and experience that love. The Bible says times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord. Peter, I think it was Acts 3.19. He said, repent, repent and believe that times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord.

That's what happens when you embrace God's love. What I mean by that is you feel the grace and mercy that went on the cross on your behalf. You embrace that love and you feel the weight being lifted, the sin being lifted from your life.

No matter what you've done, it doesn't matter what you've done. Jesus died for every single sin. And you embrace that love and the forgiveness of God begins to well up inside of you.

And I believe that's what Jesus was talking about when he said, out of your belly will flow rivers of angry water. No, change that one for the second service. Out of your belly will flow rivers of living, life-giving water.

But he said, if you believe on me, as the scriptures say, out of your belly will flow rivers of living water. See, there has to be a belief. There has to be a trust in saying, God, I need you.

I turn my life completely over to you. I repent of my sin. I'm removing all the butts, all the confusion, all the doubt.

God, I believe, but help my unbelief. I laid at the foot of the cross. I want to experience your love and your grace and God will meet you right there.

But I also want to talk to those who are, let me just shoot you straight. You've drifted from your first love. You've drifted from that first love.

Jesus talks about that in Revelation. He said, you're lukewarm. You've drifted.

You've left your first love. And it's kind of this image you have of a piece of wood out on the lake. And what happens? It just drifts.

And before you know it, it's across the lake. And there's people who they actually drift away from that. They had that first love.

Do you remember that first love? Well, let me go back to maybe your point of marriage. Remember that? Remember how much you loved that person? Call them every day. Or email, if they had email back then.

Oh, with that love. Oh, I just can't wait, I can't wait. And then what happens? See, love doesn't leave.

We leave love. And same thing can happen with God. We develop that hard heart, an angry heart, besetting sin, and we're trapped.

And we're like, oh, but God feels distant. I've drifted from my first love. Are you known more for your temper or your love? How would people, how would they identify you? Well, here's the encouraging thing about this is God says, just return.

Fall in love with me again. Isn't that amazing? God says, return to me, come back to me. And if you're critical, angry, defensive, if you've lost your joy, this is what the majority of the church needs.

You know it's true. Is a church in America joy filled? Or filled with a lot of gossip and slander and backbiting and hate and discord? So just think about that this morning. I'm gonna have the worship team come up.

And during closing worship, it's just gonna be a time of reflection. So if you need to return to your first love, or if you've never embraced that before, Pastor Abram, maybe you can get them in the prayer room. I've ended a little bit early.

If you've never embraced that, we wanna pray for you. We wanna pray with you next door about maybe your faith. If you have questions, if you have doubts, if you have uncertainty about what's going on, let us pray with you.

And also those who maybe have drifted from their first love. Because what's the key? What's the key? To repent. If I've drifted from my first love, I have to repent to get that back again.

It's not just enough to say, well, I'll try harder. No, the heart has to break. There has to be a brokenness in our hearts.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/DfSyLCgJr1Q.mp4>

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