

DISPUTED PRACTICES
Guidelines for Christian Liberty

Reprint from 1975 Edition

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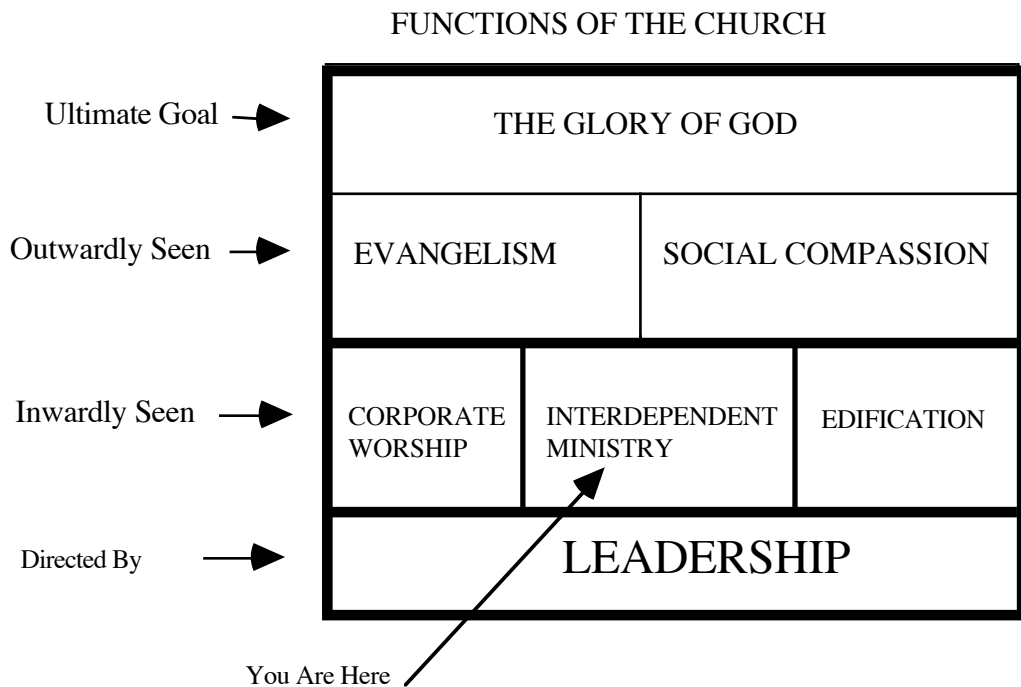
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DISPUTED PRACTICES

introduction This unit on disputed practices relates to applied ecclesiology. People in local churches are continually formalizing *do's and don'ts* to the extent that Christianity often becomes identified with the keeping of principles applied to various life activities. And then differences arise among Christians concerning this outworking of Christianity in various life activities. Sometimes the keeping of these so called principles or standards of Christianity *binds* Christians so that they can not live in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. At the other extreme some Christians abuse their *liberty* by disregarding any Christian standards or principles. Both extremes may miss the guiding voice of the Spirit. It is in the area of application of truth that disputes among Christians arise. This booklet offers some guidelines for examining in particular the *disputed practices* over which various Christians differ.

acknowledgments Thanks go to Jeff Imbach for his original work done on disputed practices. We team taught a Christian life course at the Jamaica Bible College. Jeff was a great help to me in clarifying most of the concepts given in this booklet. Most of the original work on disputed practices was his work.

Thanks also to Dr. J. Robertson McQuilkin for his help concerning principles of truth. Both in class years ago and more recently through some unpublished notes I have gained perspective on deriving principles.



OVERVIEW: **DISPUTED PRACTICES**

introduction “Some things are unquestionably right, and others are as unquestionably wrong, but there are still others as to which the consciences of Christians differ. The *question of conscience* arises among Christians and becomes the source of serious trouble. Christians who are over scrupulous are apt to condemn others as lax or *inconsistent*, while those who feel no scruples as to the practices in question are tempted to despise their fellow Christians as bigoted or fanatical or narrow.”¹ Such is the nature of the problems associated with disputed practices. This booklet describes some basic considerations and an approach to the problem of disputed practices.

sections The basic considerations and approach to disputed practices is covered in 4 sections.

- Section I. On Deriving Scriptural Principles
- Section II. Concepts Involved in Disputed Practices
- Section III. Scriptural Analysis of Passages on Disputed Practices
- Section IV. Procedures for Analysis of a Disputed Practice

goals By the time you complete this unit you will,

- be able to judge whether a principle is a consensus principle,
- recognize various levels of authority in asserting principles upon others,
- have been introduced to a simplified procedure for deducing principles from Scripture,
- be able to define several concepts associated with disputed practices,
- recognize the basic principles drawn from the major passages on disputed practices,
- be able to associate the basic principles on disputed practices to the passages from which they are drawn,
- be able to use the flow chart to analyze a disputed practice,
- be exposed to suggestions for following-up your analysis in a given situation.

¹See p. 156, Charles R. Erdman’s, **The Epistle of Paul to the Romans**, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1966. Used by permission.

PREVIEW: SECTION I. ON DERIVING SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES

introduction When we talk about *disputed practices* we are in an area in which Christians disagree.

Part of the disagreement comes from a lack of understanding what the Bible teaches on the subject. There is a lack of clearly defined principles to use for a given practice.

Then too disagreement also comes from a differing philosophy of deriving principles of truth and applying them to life. Most do not have a systematic approach for deriving principles of truth. Lack of clarity in deriving principles and in distinguishing between principles and application in principles also adds confusion concerning disputed practices.

Section I establishes the basis upon which principles of truth are derived in this booklet. It also shows the difference between principle and application of principle. With these basic considerations in mind we can then move on to the sections dealing more directly with disputed practices and principles of truth applied to them.

objectives When you complete Section I,

- you will be able to state in your own words the definition of a consensus principle,
- you will have been exposed to levels of dogmatism in asserting truth,
- if given a principle of truth and the reasoning used to arrive at it you will be able to indicate the level of dogmatism of the principle,
- you will be able to discriminate between a principle and application of the principle,
- you will be able to recognize the basic procedure for determining principles from the Scripture.

8 FACTORS INFLUENCING CERTAINTY OF PRINCIPLES

introduction Below are listed some factors which must be considered when we consider a principle drawn from a passage in Scriptures. Following this list is a question checklist which reflect these factors.

- factors affecting certainty of a principle
- assurance that the text is correct
 - clarity of the passage
 - consensus interpretation
 - consensus concerning to whom the passage applies
 - consensus concerning under what circumstances the passage applies
 - other passages which contradict, modify, restrict, clarify, or limit the passage
 - assurance that progressive revelation does not invalidate it
 - intentional selection—the principle is repeated in a number of ways through various passages

Questionnaire Checklist--Reflecting the Factors

CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLE,

Yes	No	
		Are there textual problems involved which affect the principle?
		Do these problems bear directly on the principle?
		Is the passage obscure?
		Is there a consensus interpretation on the passage?
		as to whom applied?
		as to when applied?
		as to circumstances under which applied?
		Do other passages seem to contradict, modify, restrict, clarify, or limit the passage?
		Would the principle be affected by the progressive revelation of truth in the Scripture?
		Is the principle seen in other passages and other ways in the Scriptures?

LEVELS OF DOGMATISM IN ASSERTING PRINCIPLES UPON OTHERS

introduction To what degree can we bind other's consciences by principles that we draw from Scripture. That is, to what degree can we assert we have God's will for people so that all must obey or follow it. The following tables try to categorize principles of truth with regard to the sources or ways they are derived and the certainty with which we can enforce them upon others with authority.

THOSE AUTHORITATIVELY ASSERTED

SOURCE OF PRINCIPLE	HOW OBTAINED	LEVEL OF DOGMATISM
Commands given to all and <u>not</u> qualified in any way	principle is the interpretative statement of the command	assuming strong certainty factors then the principle CAN BE AUTHORITATIVELY ASSERTED AS GOD'S WILL FOR OTHERS.
Teaching given to all and <u>not</u> qualified in any way	principle is found by using hermeneutical principles as applied to the language form in which the teaching is given	assuming strong certainty factors then the principle CAN BE AUTHORITATIVELY ASSERTED AS GOD'S WILL FOR OTHERS

SOME QUALIFYING FACTORS

SOURCE OF PRINCIPLE	HOW OBTAINED
<p>Commands which are qualified in Scripture as <u>to whom</u> and/or under <u>what circumstances</u> they apply</p> <p>Teachings which are qualified in Scripture as <u>to whom</u> and/or under what <u>circumstances</u> apply</p>	<p>PRESUPPOSITIONS CONCERNING THESE SOURCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These sources reflect the will of God in some given context and therefore will <u>not</u> violate anything compatible with the nature of God. • The reason for specific limitations are most likely cultural or due to the progressive revelation of truth. • Since the teaching or the command was the will of God in a given context, the <u>purpose or reason</u> underlying why the teaching or command was given will always be compatible with God's nature. • Where such a purpose or reason is explicitly given in Scripture, a principle of universal application can usually be derived.

OTHER QUALIFYING CONDITIONS

	IF	AND	THEN
<p>Commands which are modified by later revelation</p> <p>Teachings which are modified by later revelation</p> <p>Commands or teachings which are qualified or modified</p>	<p>Reason or purpose is explicitly given</p> <p>Reason or purpose is <u>not</u> given</p>	<p>an interpretive statement of reason or purpose which is compatible with God's nature can be stated</p> <p>One is forced to deduce such a reason or purpose</p>	<p>The interpretive statement carries the force of principle and assuming strong certainty factors CAN BE AUTHORITATIVELY ASSERTED AS GOD'S WILL FOR OTHERS</p> <p>The interpretive statement of the deduced reason or purpose should be considered as a suggested guideline without the force of Biblical authority. It can <u>not</u> be asserted as God's will for others</p>

LEVELS OF DOGMATISM IN ASSERTING PRINCIPLES UPON OTHERS continued

FURTHER QUALIFYING FACTORS – HISTORICAL OR NARRATIVE MATERIAL

SOURCE OF PRINCIPLE	HOW OBTAINED		LEVEL OF DOGMATISM
Historical incident or actions of Biblical characters	IF the Scriptures explicitly commend or condemn the historical incident or actions	AND An interpretive statement indicating the underlying principle behind the commendation or condemnation can be stated.	THEN Assuming strong certainty\ factors the interpretive statement CAN BE AUTHORITATIVELY ASSERTED AS GOD'S WILL FOR OTHERS.
	the Scriptures do <u>not</u> explicitly commend or condemn the historical incident or actions.	One is forced to deduce such a reason or purpose	The interpretive statement of the deduced reason or purpose should be considered as a suggested guideline with the force of Biblical authority. It can <u>not</u> be asserted as God's will for others.
External to the Scriptures (i.e. the Scriptures are silent or lack sufficient evidence upon which to deduce a principle on a given issue)	VIA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voice of Church • empirical investigation • logic • experience 	Assuming that such principles are compatible with Scripture they can be suggested as guidelines but can <u>not</u> be asserted as God's will for others.	

Related Maps

Consensus Principle, 3
 8 Factors Influencing Certainty of Principles, 4
 How to Determine Principles from Scripture, 8

FEEDBACK ON PRINCIPLES AND DOGMATISM

Question 1. List here in your own words the definition of a consensus principle.

A consensus principle

Question 2. Given the following principle taken from Genesis 2:18-24.

MARRIAGE IS A GOD ORDAINED INSTITUTION (implication-propagation of race outside marriage in not ordained of God. Assume there is consensus that the passage is a didactic (teaching) passage within the historical narrative generally given in Genesis.

At what level of dogmatism would you assert this principle.

- a,. Authoritatively asserted as God's will for others.
- b. Given only as a suggested guideline.

State here any assumptions as to certainty factors you made in choosing your answer.

ANSWERS-----

1. A consensus principle is a generalized statement of a principle of moral truth on which there is a consensus agreement by Biblical scholars that the said principle is an eternal fact not bound or limited by a historical/cultural/time situation and hence, *can* be required of people in any historical/cultural/time situation.

2. Your choice

I marked a. Authoritatively asserted as God's will for others.

I put this in the category of teaching given to all and not qualified in any way. I would assume all the certainty factors are fairly positive.

HOW TO DETERMINE PRINCIPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

STEP	PROCEDURE	DETAILED PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS
1.	SYSTEMATICALLY APPLY HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES TO OBTAIN THE AUTHOR'S MEANING OF THE UNIT OF SCRIPTURE BEING STUDIED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apply all the principles of general hermeneutics. 2. Be particularly careful to ascertain the relationship of the unit to the larger section. 3. Always relate the passage to the theme of the book or to the major idea of the section of which the unit is a part. 4. Apply the needed principles from special hermeneutics. 5. Determine if there are any textual problems in the unit. 6. Read widely in commentaries to validate your own study and to get a feel for consensus on the unit.
2.	CLASSIFY THE UNIT AS TO WHOM IT WAS INTENDED BY THE AUTHOR.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To all. 2. To a selected group. If so, specify the group. 3. If to a specific group does the passage itself indicate wider application? If so, state the limits of application suggested?
3.	CLASSIFY THE UNIT AS TO CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT APPLIES.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is it limited by time? If so, specify. 2. Is it limited by culture? If so, specify. 3. Does it apply only to a specific issue? If so, specify. 4. Does the unit itself limit application in any way? If so, specify. 5. Is it limited by any other circumstances? If so, specify.
4.	SPECIFY CLEARLY THE CONTEXT OF UNIT (AND SUBUNITS) ALONG WITH THE FLOW OF THOUGHT, AND DEVELOPMENT OF FLOW OF THOUGHT TO SERVE AS A BASIS FOR EXAMINING.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek to write an interpretive statement for the, each segment of the flow of thought, each development of the flow of thought. 2. Reduce illustrations to a statement which gives the intention of the illustration. 3. Determine the intention of Scripture quoted in the unit. Reduce the intent to a statement. 4. Examine these statements as if they were principles. Do they in fact touch upon some aspect of God's character, God's actions, or God's requirements for people? If so, treat as a principle. 5. Within the limit of applicability, generalize the wording of each principle statement. Use generic language wherever possible.
5.	LIST ALL COMMANDS AS INTERPRETED IN THE CONTEXT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpretive statement as seen in the context and as modified by contextual applicability. 2. Does the statement relate to God's nature, God's actions toward people or God's requirements for people? If so, treat as principle. 3. Within the limit of applicability generalize the wording of each principle. Use generic language where possible.

HOW TO DETERMINE PRINCIPLES FROM SCRIPTURE continued

STEP	PROCEDURE	DETAILED PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS
6.	DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF DOGMATISM FOR EACH PRINCIPLE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For each principle locate it on the levels of dogmatism chart by identifying the source of the principle. 2. For commands or teachings which are qualified state specifically the qualifying limitations. The principles drawn from these as modified may be applied. 3. Where the modification involves apparent contradiction or removal, identify the reason why the command or teaching was given. Analyzed in terms of God's nature, actions, or requirements this reason put as an interpretive statement stands as a principle. 4. Where the modification involves apparent contradiction or even removal only the principle drawn from the reason why the command or teaching was given should be used. 5. For historical literature, actions of Bible characters, or non-didactic literature use only explicit scriptural commendations or condemnations to determine principles. Examine the interpretive statement as a potential principle.
7.	DISTINGUISH BETWEEN PRINCIPLE AND POSSIBLE PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATION OF.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List principles. 2. List under principles possible applications. 3. Remember the more generic the principle the more difficult to assert with authority the application of it since the principle and application differ more broadly. 4. For commands the application usually follows directly from the command and can be asserted with equal force. 5. Application of principles to specifics <u>not</u> given in Scripture should <u>not</u> be given equal authority with Scripture.

Related Maps

- Consensus Principle, 3
- 8 Factors Influencing Certainty of Principles, 4
- Levels of Dogmatism in Asserting Truth, 5

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRINCIPLE AND APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLE

introduction	One of my earlier Bible teachers , Frank Sells, used to make a statement such as this. "Students, the principle is <i>absolutely clear</i> . You may disagree with me on my application. But you can't disagree with me on the principle." And many times that was so. He was pointing out the need to distinguish between a standard, principle, rule, etc. and how that standard, principle, or rule "fits" in terms of our daily life and situation. And so too we must heed this caution.
basic difference	While a principle is a statement of fact concerning God's nature, His actions or His requirements for people, the <i>application of a principle</i> is the <i>specific action intended or taken</i> as a result of our knowledge of the principle.
some considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where Scripture specifies the application as well as the command or teaching we can assert the application just as authoritatively as the principle. • The more <i>direct</i> is the teaching or command the more we can be sure our application is a proper use of the principle. For many principles to state them is to apply them. • Where principles operate using high level generic wording there will be a greater difference between principles and application of principle. • Recognize that for high level generically worded principles, the applications themselves will usually be interpretive; where the applications can be clearly seen in terms of other more specific principles or seen in other Scripture we can afford to be dogmatic in asserting the application. Otherwise the application better fits in terms of dogmatism in the area of guidelines.
cautions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand firmly on a consensus principle. • Be tolerant on the specific application of a principle unless Scripture gives authority for dogmatism.
Related Maps	Consensus Principle, 3 Levels of Dogmatism in Asserting Truth, 5 How to Determine Principles . . . , 8

FEEDBACK ON DETERMINING PRINCIPLES

Question 1. Given the following principle of truth

Principle—DO NOT JUDGE OTHERS IN MATTERS OF PRACTICE WHEN CONSCIENCE ALONE IS USED TO DETERMINE THE RIGHT OR WRONG OF THE PRACTICE.

Reasoning—This principle was drawn both from commands and teachings given in Romans 14:1-12. The passage is applied generally to Christian conduct between Christians. There is no later revelation on the truths shown here. The principle is not modified or restricted in any way.

What level of dogmatism would you assert concerning the principle?

Question 2. List here *how* you would discriminate between a principle and the application of the principle.

ANSWERS-----

1. Your choice. I would assert it AUTHORITATIVELY AS GOD'S WILL FOR CHRISTIANS since I would classify it as a principle coming from the source—commands to all (all Christians) not qualified in any way.
2. The principle gives the factual statement about God or His requirements for people. The application tells how this factual statement will be used or applied to attitudes, or actions involved in everyday living.

PREVIEW: SECTION II. CONCEPTS INVOLVED IN DISPUTED PRACTICES

introduction Four definitions which are important to the understanding of Disputed Practices are discussed in this section. The definitions result from a study of the two major passages on disputed practices—Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10.

concepts
in this
section

- disputed practice (two distinctive kinds)
- *Stronger Christian*
- *Weaker Christian*
- stumbling block

objectives When you complete this section,

- you will be able to state in your own words definitions for the four major concepts defined in this section.
- you will be able to state in your own words the difference between the two basic kinds of disputed practices.
- given case studies of disputed practices you will be able to tell which of the two basic kinds of disputed practices is represented by each case study.
- given case studies you will be able to identify the *Stronger Christian*, *Weaker Christian*, and stumbling block.
- you will be able to write in your own words cautions to remember as a *Weaker Christian* and as a *Stronger Christian*.

DISPUTED PRACTICE

Synonym: Meat Issue, Questionable Practice, Doubtful Practice, Matters of Conscience

introduction	Paul describes in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10 several practices over which local church members were having controversy. Some felt it was all right to participate in the practices. Others could not in good conscience participate. Paul was less concerned with who was "right" than how to get along even though a difference existed. Questions of conscience with respect to disputed practices still exist today. Some view them as amoral practices. Others feel they violate moral standards. To know the difference with certainty we must be able to identify what a disputed practice is and distinguish it from a "forbidden practice."
definition	A <u>disputed practice</u> is a practice which has <u>no</u> inherent moral value <i>but</i> about which some people have religious convictions.
comment	By <i>religious convictions</i> is meant that the person has <i>no</i> freedom in his/her conscience to do or allow the practice for he/she feels the practice to be morally wrong.
Biblical Examples Romans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eating meat • drinking wine • regarding certain days as particularly Holy
Biblical Example 1 Cor 8-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eating meat which was connected with pagan temple worship
Biblical Example Gal 2:12-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jew eating with Gentile
Biblical Example Col 2:16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eating meat • drinking (wine probably) • observing or failing to observe a feast day, special Holy day, or Sabbath
possible contemporary examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • length of men's hair • kind of music used in a church service • recreation on "Christian Sabbath" • social amusements (television, card playing, pool, dominoes, music enjoyed, etc. • women's clothing, makeup, etc. • earrings in men's ears

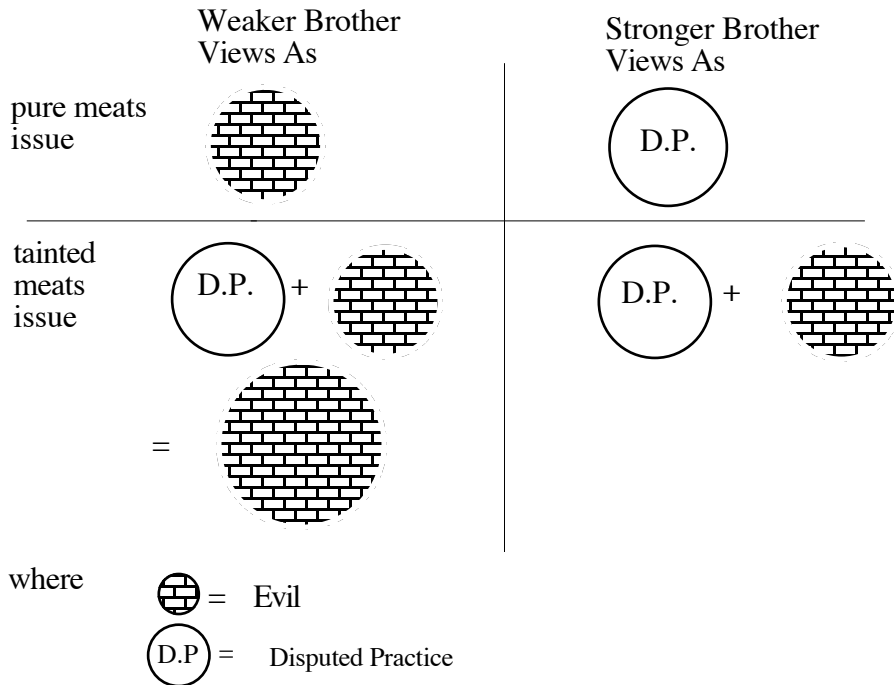
2 KINDS OF DISPUTED PRACTICES

introduction Remember, a disputed practice is a practice which is inherently amoral. An additional complication in accepting a disputed practice as a legitimate practice occurs when there is some evil associated with the practice. The *Weaker Christian* tends to then see evil in the practice itself —falling into the trap of assigning "guilt by association." The *Stronger Christian* tends to distinguish between the inherently pure practice and the evil which may be associated with the practice. Romans 14 deals with disputed practices which generally have no evil associations. 1 Corinthians 8-10 deals with disputed practices which have evil associations.²

TWO KINDS OF DISPUTED PRACTICES

Name	Scripture	Basic Difference
"pure meats issue"	Romans 14	Amoral; no attached evil stigma
"tainted meats issue"	1 Corinthians 8-10	Amoral + evil stigma or practices associated with it

Diagrammatic View of Disputed Practices



²I am using the terms *weaker Christian* and *stronger Christian* instead of the actual Pauline terms, stronger brother and weaker brother since I recognize that his terminology represents Christians of both genders.

FEEDBACK ON DEFINITIONS OF DISPUTED PRACTICES

Question 1. Write in your own words the definition of a disputed practice.

A disputed practice is

Question 2. Why is the word "disputed" used in the term *disputed practice*?

Question 3. What are the two kinds of disputed practices?

Romans 14

1 Corinthians 8-10

Question 4. Disputed practices deal basically with (check all that are correct)

- a. Amoral practices
- b. Moral practices
- c. Practices which deal with matters of conscience
- d. Legalistic rules taught in the Scriptures

ANSWERS-----

1. A *disputed practice* is a practice which has *no* inherent moral value *but* about which some people have religious convictions.
2. "Disputed" indicates that there is disagreement over the practice. Some think it is O.K. Others think it is wrong.
3. Romans 14—Amoral—no evil associations (pure meats issue)
1 Corinthians 8-10—Amoral + evil association (tainted meats issue)
4. a. c.

STRONGER CHRISTIAN synonym: Pauline Term = Stronger Brother

introduction	Paul describes two kinds of Christians when he deals with the disputed practice doctrine. One is the <i>Stronger Christian</i> —the other, the <i>Weaker Christian</i> . Each of us needs to be familiar with these concepts since on any given issue we may be the <i>Weaker Christian</i> or the <i>Stronger Christian</i> . On most disputed practices everyone assumes he/she is the <i>Stronger Christian</i> , primarily because they do not know the actual definition and because of the negative connotation of "weak."
definition	A <u><i>Stronger Christian</i></u> in a disputed practice issue refers to the person who in the specific situation recognizes that the particular disputed practice has no inherent moral value in it.
comment	Note carefully the words "in a disputed practice" and "in the specific situation." One can be a <i>Stronger Christian</i> on one issue and a <i>Weaker Christian</i> on another issue. <i>Stronger</i> seems to be used in the sense of having a clear conscience before God to participate and allow others to participate. The implications—especially from 1 Corinthians 8-10—are that the <i>Stronger Christian</i> has understanding of the teaching on the issue and thus has freedom concerning the issue.
spirituality	<i>Neither</i> the <i>Stronger Christian</i> or the <i>Weaker Christian</i> are said to be more spiritual. Some people wrongly think that the <i>Stronger Christian</i> is more spiritual. Both are considered by Paul as spiritual for both do what they believe to be right before God. The question is <u>not</u> who is right or more spiritual <i>but</i> how can these who are in dispute over a particular practice get along with each other peaceably so as to please God.
caution	The <i>Stronger Christian</i> has to be on the guard against pride. He/she is certain he/she understands the Scriptures on the issue and knows God has given freedom with regard to the practice. He/she tends to exalt his/her knowledge and flaunt his/her freedom. He/she also tends to be scornful toward the <i>Weaker Christian</i> for he/she feels that the <i>Weaker Christian</i> needs to grow up and understand his/her Christian liberty on the issue.
questions	Here are some questions a <i>Stronger Christian</i> must carefully face. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I in fact know all that bears on the issue from the Scriptures? Perhaps the reason I have freedom is because I don't know what the Bible says. • Am I displaying a prideful attitude in anyway because I think I have freedom with regard to the practice? • What is more important to me—the fact that I am right and know all that the Scriptures teach on the practice and have freedom to engage in the practice or my concern and forbearance for the <i>Weaker Christian</i>. • Can I freely give up my freedom to engage in the disputed practice?
Related Maps	Disputed Practice, 13 Two Kinds of Disputed Practices, 14 Weaker Christian, 17

WEAKER CHRISTIAN synonym: Pauline Term = Weaker Brother

introduction	Paul describes two kinds of Christians when he deals with the disputed practice doctrine. One is the <i>Stronger Christian</i> —the other, the <i>Weaker Christian</i> . Each of us needs to be familiar with these concepts since on any given issue we may be the <i>Weaker Christian</i> or the <i>Stronger Christian</i> . Few ever admit to being the <i>Weaker Christian</i> , primarily because of a lack of clarity as to what the <i>Weaker Christian</i> means and secondarily because of the negative connotation of weak. Inherent in the very concept of the <i>Weaker Christian</i> is the inability to recognize that one is the <i>Weaker Christian</i> .
definition	A <u><i>Weaker Christian</i></u> in a disputed practice issue refers to the person who in the specific situation holds religious convictions regarding the practice.
comment	By "religious convictions" is meant that the person has <i>no</i> freedom in his/her conscience to do or allow the practice for he/she feels the practice to be morally wrong.
comment	Note carefully the words "in a disputed practice issue" and "in the specific situation." One can be a <i>Weaker Christian</i> on one issue and a <i>Stronger Christian</i> on another issue.
spirituality	<i>Neither</i> the <i>Stronger Christian</i> or the <i>Weaker Christian</i> is more spiritual. The <i>Weaker Christian</i> (though he/she may <u>not</u> call himself that) usually thinks he/she is more spiritual for he/she is more <i>strict</i> in his/her practices before God. However, Paul considers both the <i>Weaker Christian</i> and the <i>Stronger Christian</i> as being spiritual as long as they both out of pure motives do what they do because they believe it to be right before God. The question is <u>not</u> who is right or more spiritual, but how can those who are in a dispute over a particular practice get along with each other peaceably so as to please God.
caution	The <i>Weaker Christian</i> associates moral value to the practice as being inherently a part of the practice. Therefore, according to the <i>Weaker Christian</i> people who engage in the practice are sinning. He/she therefore tends to be critical of the <i>Stronger Christian</i> and to judge him as a sinner. He/she sees the <i>Stronger Christian</i> as "going liberal" and <u>not</u> following hard after God. The <i>Weaker Christian</i> has a tendency to judge spirituality by the observance of these "scruples" which he/she believes in.
questions	Here are some questions a <i>Weaker Christian</i> must carefully face: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I believe this practice to be wrong because the Scriptures clearly teaches it so or because my conscience tells me it is wrong? • Do I tend to be critical of those who feel it is all right to engage in this practice and feel they are sinning when they do? • Am I willing to face the Scriptural teaching on this? • Am I willing to allow my Christian freedom to engage in the practice without judging him if Scripture actually allows that freedom?
Related Maps	Disputed Practice, 13 Two Kinds of Disputed Practice, 16 Stronger Christian, 16

STUMBLING BLOCK

introduction In dealing with disputed practices Paul recognizes that the *Stronger Christian* may well have liberty to engage in the practice. However, Paul also recognizes that by freely engaging in the practice the *Stronger Christian* may cause the *Weaker Christian* to also engage in the practice against the dictates of his/her conscience. To cause him to do so is to cause him to sin. Paul thus limits one's liberty to engage in a disputed practice if it will cause the *Weaker Christian* to also engage in the practice against his/her conscience.

definition *Stumbling block* is figurative language which describes the process of a *Stronger Christian* with a free conscience engaging in a disputed practice which results in a *Weaker Christian* following his/her example by engaging in the same practice against his/her conscience. For the *Weaker Christian* to do so is sin. He/she has "stumbled." The *Stronger Christian's* participation provided the stumbling block which gave occasion for the *Weaker Christian* to go against his/her conscience.

comment Notice that putting a "stumbling block" in the path of the *Weaker Christian* has to do with causing him to sin against his/her conscience by engaging in the disputed practice. It is not defined in terms of causing the *Weaker Christian* to be *displeased* with the *Stronger Christian* or be *offended* in his/her attitude toward the *Stronger Christian*.

caution Paul clearly states that a person must not do that which he believes to be wrong. *Nor* must anyone cause others to do that which they feel to be wrong. For a *Stronger Christian* to participate in a disputed practice does not mean that he/she is putting a stumbling block in the path of the *Weaker Christian*. However, if it causes the *Weaker Christian* to engage in the practice against his/her conscience then it is wrong.

Related Maps Disputed Practice, 13
Stronger Christian, 16
Weaker Christian, 17

FEEDBACK ON STRONGER/ WEAKER CHRISTIAN, STUMBLING BLOCK

Question 1.

In your own words define the following concepts.

- a. disputed practice—
- b. *Stronger Christian*—
- c. *Weaker Christian*—
- d. stumbling block—

Question 2.

List the two basic kinds of disputed practices and state in your own words the main difference between the two

Romans 14—

I Corinthians 8–10—

Question 3.

Write S for the *Stronger Christian* or W for the *Weaker Christian* in the blanks beside the names.

Case 1: To Drink or Not Drink

Jim feels it is sinning against God to drink real wine. Therefore he refuses to celebrate the Lord's supper in his friend Tom's church (Brethren) when he visits. Tom knows that participating in the Lord's supper doesn't violate "be not drunk with wine" nor other principles involving moderation. Tom therefore freely participates in the Lord's supper.

_____ Jim _____ Tom

Case 2: To Eat or Not to Eat

James loves a good steak. He grew up in Texas where good beef was available. He is a missionary in India. Recently his good friend Ramdial Handi accepted Christ as Savior. All his life he has been taught that it is wrong to eat meat since eating meat requires some animal to die and life is sacred. Therefore, Ramdial feels in his heart that it is wrong to eat meat. Even as a Christian he still is a practicing vegetarian. Concerning the practice of eating meat identify the stronger and *Weaker Christian*.

_____ James _____ Ramdial

Case 3: Tennis Anyone?

Good Friday is a special revered religious day in Jamaica. Robby and Bobby play tennis on Good Friday. Jarvis attended regular church services and on his way home saw Robbie and Bobby playing tennis instead of going to church. Jarvis decided he better place Robbie and Bobby on his prayer list since they obviously had backslidden. He certainly would never play tennis, or cricket, or any sport on such a religious day.

_____ Robbie _____ Bobby _____ Jarvis

FEEDBACK STRONGER/WEAKER CHRISTIAN, STUMBLING BLOCK cont.

Question 4.

Which kind of disputed practice does the following describe:

Kingsley had become a Christian just 2 months ago. Several long-standing habits were immediately thrown aside as not being compatible with the Christian way of life. For one thing he no longer went down to the store each evening and drank Red Stripe while he gambled at dominoes with the boys. The youth group at church was planning a social get together. Several games were suggested. Dominoes was one of them. Kingsley was aghast that older Christians would even suggest such a thing. Didn't they know better? He protested so strongly that Sammy, the youth group leader, wisely suggested that they not play dominoes. For after all there were plenty of games they could enjoy beside dominoes.

Check the kind of disputed practice described above.

- _____ Romans 14 pure meats issue
- _____ I Corinthians 8–10 tainted meats issue

Question 5.

List here in your own words some problems that the *Weaker* and *Stronger Christian* must be cautioned about.

Cautions for *Weaker Christian* _____

Cautions for *Stronger Christian* _____

PREVIEW: SECTION III. SCRIPTURAL ANALYSIS --DISPUTED PRACTICES

Introduction: What teaching do we have in the Scriptures on Disputed Practices? Several passages touch on the issue.

Among them are

- Romans 14
- I Corinthians 8–10
- Galatians 2:12–21
- Colossians 2:16

Galatians 2:12–21 illustrates Paul using his own principles to deal with a very ticklish disputed practice—especially so since the doctrine of justification was involved.

Colossians 2:16 touches on several issues in which some were judging others. The Colossians heresy was involved since the special issues mentioned were part of the practice of those involved in the heresy. Romans 14 dealing with a pure meats issue and I Corinthians 8–10 dealing with a tainted meats issue give the exhaustive treatment of teaching dealing with disputed practices. This section analyzes these major passages, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8–10, and sets forth some principles which can be applied to any disputed practice—even the ones we face.

Objectives When you finish this section,

- Given a list of principles you will identify from the list those which apply to disputed practices as derived from Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8–10.
- Given a list of principles you will be able to associate each principle with the major passage from which it is drawn.

SUMMARY OF DISPUTED PRACTICE PASSAGE--Romans 14-15:13

- Introduction Problems concerning matters of conscience and judging each other in terms of activities or actions have always plagued religious people. Jesus saw these matters clearly. His "seed" teachings,
- Matt 7:12 Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.
 - Mark 2:27, 28 The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.
 - Mark 7:18, 19 Are ye so without understanding also? Perceive ye not that whatsoever goeth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly and goeth out into the draught? This he said making all meats clean.
 - Luke 6:31, 32 And as ye would that people should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. And if ye love them that love you what thank have ye? For even sinners do the same, serve as the basis for Paul's treatment of disputed practices in Romans 14.

purpose of Romans 14-15:13 related to the book as a whole Romans teaches that God's gracious provision of Christ's righteousness (the Gospel of God) to every believer encompasses man's total need, is consistent with redemptive history and applies to all of life's relationships. The passage dealing with "disputed practices" occurs in the third section of the book (12-15:13). The emphasis of this large section of the book shows how the Gospel must apply and work itself out in all of life's daily relationships. Notice the flow of ideas and where the disputed practice passage fits into this flow of ideas.

Section III. Romans 12-15:13

Major Idea — THE GOSPEL APPLIES TO ALL OF LIFE'S RELATIONSHIPS

- Unit 1. 12:1-8 Contextual subject — There are relationships to God and His church flowing from the gracious gifts of God.
- Unit 2. 12:9-21 Contextual subject — Relationships to fellow Christians are based on the principle of love.
- Unit 3. 13:1-7 Contextual subject — The Christian has a certain relationship to government.
- Unit 4. 13:8-10 Contextual subject — The Christian must rightly relate himself to other citizens.
- Unit 5. 13:11-14 Contextual subject — Exhortation to enforce the foregoing relationships is based on the hope of Christ's return.
- Unit 6. 14:1-12 Contextual subject — Relations with Christians over disputed practices are matters of conscience.
- Unit 7. 14:13-23 Contextual subject — Relations between the stronger and *Weaker Christian* involve two basic considerations.
- Unit 8. 15:1-13 Contextual subject — Christian forbearance with one another's views promotes unity in worship.

So then the emphasis of the "disputed practice" passage concerns relationships between Christians and shows that the Gospel properly applied should control our actions and attitudes in disputed practices.

SUMMARY OF DISPUTED PRACTICE PASSAGE—Romans 14-15:13 continued

specific problem Paul deals either with a real problem existing in the church at Rome or a potential problem which was likely to arise.

The problem — one Christian who feels that a certain practice is wrong accusingly judges another Christian who feels free to indulge in the practice. The Christian who feels free to indulge in the practice pridefully points to knowledge about the practice and looks down upon the "bigoted" Christian who ought to know better. And as a result disunity occurs in the church because of the differing views and practices of the two Christians. Further, there is the possibility that the "narrow" Christian may be led to sin against that which he/she believes.

Basic Contextual Statements

<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Contextual Statement</u>
Romans 14:1-12	DO NOT JUDGE OTHERS.
Romans 14:13-23	DO NOT CAUSE OTHERS TO FALL
Romans 15:1-13	FOLLOW CHRIST’S EXAMPLE OF
	FOREBEARANCE AND LOVE.

major principles from Romans The following principles are drawn from the above contextual statements as modified by the flow of thought in the context.

- DO NOT JUDGE OTHERS IN MATTERS OF PRACTICE WHEN CONSCIENCE IS USED TO DETERMINE THE RIGHT OR WRONG OF THE PRACTICE.
- DO NOT CAUSE ANOTHER TO SIN AGAINST HIS/HER CONSCIENCE BY YOUR EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.
- SHOW MUTUAL FORBEARANCE AND LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER TO UNITEDLY PRAISE GOD.

ROMANS 14–15:13 — PRINCIPLES TO APPLY IN A DISPUTED PRACTICE

Introduction: Below are listed the major principles drawn from the unit context statements (bold faced) and principles drawn from commands and teaching seen in the development of the flow of thought for each context.

DO NOT JUDGE OTHER IN MATTERS OF PRACTICE WHEN CONSCIENCE IS USED TO DETERMINE THE RIGHT OR WRONG OF THE PRACTICE.

- A *Weaker Christian* is to be received without arguments concerning his/her stand on disputed practices.
- A *Stronger Christian* shall not think less of his/her *Weaker Christian* because of his/her stand on a disputed practice.
- A *Weaker Christian* must not judge the *Stronger Christian* as sinning because he/she participates in the disputed practice.
- God can keep a *Stronger Christian* from sinning regardless of his/her participation in the disputed practice.
- Both the *Weaker Christian* and the *Stronger Christian* should be fully persuaded in their own minds as to what is right concerning the disputed practice.
- Both the *Weaker Christian* and the *Stronger Christian* should have their actions with regard to the disputed practice subject to Jesus' rule in their lives.
- Neither the weaker or the *Stronger Christian* has the right to judge each other since judgment belongs to God.
- Each person will answer to God for his/her own actions.

DO NOT CAUSE ANOTHER TO SIN AGAINST HIS/HER CONSCIENCE BY YOUR EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

- Food in general is amoral.
- If a *Weaker Christian* does not recognize that a given practice is amoral but thinks it is immoral it is immoral to him.
- A *Stronger Christian* violates the principle of love for his/her Christian friend if his/her participation in a disputed practice causes the *Weaker Christian* to participate in the disputed practice and thus sin by violating his/her own conscience.
- Practices of moral indifference are much less important than essentials such as righteousness, peace and joy.
- Christians should major on the essentials (righteousness, peace, joy) rather than matters of moral indifference for God and people approve this.
- The *Stronger Christian* should regulate his/her liberty with regard to a disputed practice by his/her regard for maintaining peace and helping to build up others.
- The *Stronger Christian* should, if necessary, exercise his/her liberty with regard to the disputed practice alone before God rather than have it cause a *Weaker Christian* to sin.

SHOW MUTUAL FORBEARANCE AND LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER TO UNITELY PRAISE GOD.

- *Stronger Christians* should recognize that in forbearing with the *Weaker Christian* he/she is following Christ's own example of not pleasing himself.
- Both *stronger* and *Weaker Christians* should seek the good for each other rather than pleasing themselves and in so doing are following Christ's example.
- By forbearing with each other's differences the stronger and *Weaker Christian* can maintain a harmonious fellowship which brings glory to God.
- Christ's basic ministry reconciled people of differing races.

Related Maps Consensus Principle, 3. How to Determine Principles from Scripture,
10. Disputed Practice, 13. Stronger Christian, 16. Weaker Christian, 17

SUMMARY OF DISPUTED PRACTICE PASSAGE—I Corinthians 8–10

introduction	Like the church at Rome the Corinthian Church was plagued with people who differed concerning a disputed practice. But the problem in Corinth was slightly different in that the disputed practice was associated with a pagan religion. I have called this special disputed practice the "tainted meats issue" as opposed to the disputed practice of Romans 14 which I called a "pure meats issue."
purpose of I Cor 8-10 related to book as a whole	Paul in I Corinthians is dealing with a series of problems which confronted the church in Corinth. The letter as a whole has as its main purpose the solutions of these problems. The book as a whole teaches that church problems, individual or corporate, can be solved by submitting to God's revealed truth concerning those problems. I Corinthians 8–10 deals with a disputed practice--eating of meat which had been offered to idols.
specific problem defined	The Corinthian Christians for the most part were relatively new Christians who had been converted out of a pagan religious background. Many had forsaken idolatry when they turned to Christianity. It was thus natural that they associated things connected to idolatry and their former pagan religion as evil. Meat which was connected with sacrifices to idols in the temple were sold in markets. Was it wrong for Christians to buy this meat and use it? Furthermore, Christians might find themselves in social situations where this meat was served. Christians differed in their views. Some felt free to purchase, serve, and eat this meat. Others felt it wrong since it was so closely connected with idolatry. What should be done in regards to this disputed practice of "tainted meats?"
major principles from units	Paul answers the Corinthians' questions on the "tainted meats" issue in chapters 8–10. Five major principles concerning the disputed practice was given.
passage chapter 8	<u>MAJOR PRINCIPLE</u> THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MAY CAUSE THE WEAKER CHRISTIAN TO SIN, HENCE CONTROL YOUR LIBERTY BECAUSE YOU LOVE YOUR CHRISTIAN FRIEND.
chapter 9	WHERE THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY HINDERS CHRISTIAN WORK BE WILLING TO GIVE IT UP IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE WORK.
chapter 10 vs 1-13	PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MAY ENDANGER YOUR OWN CHRISTIAN WALK IF YOU DO NOT MAINTAIN CAUTION.
chapter 10 vs 14–22	THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY CONCERNING A "TAINTED MEATS" ISSUE MAY IDENTIFY YOU WITH THE EVIL ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRACTICE SO THAT YOUR TESTIMONY IS WEAKENED.
chapter 10 vs 23–11:1	AN OVERALL CONCLUDING PRINCIPLE ON DISPUTED PRACTICES: CONSIDER NOT ONLY WHAT IS ALLOWABLE BUT WHAT IS MOST PROFITABLE FOR THE WELFARE OF ALL IN DECIDING WHAT YOU WILL DO IN A GIVEN DISPUTED PRACTICE.

I Corinthians 8–10 — PRINCIPLES TO APPLY IN DISPUTED PRACTICE

introduction Below are listed the major principles drawn from the unit context statements and principles drawn from commands and teaching seen in the development of the flow of thought for each context which apply in particular to the "tainted meats" issue.

Principles THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MAY CAUSE THE *WEAKER CHRISTIAN* TO SIN HENCE CONTROL YOUR LIBERTY BECAUSE YOU LOVE YOUR CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

- The *Stronger Christian* should recognize that an attitude of love about the disputed practice is more important than knowing about liberty in the practice since knowledge can lead to pride while love can build up others.
- The *Stronger Christian* must be on guard that his/her liberty in a disputed practice cause a *Weaker Christian* to sin against his/her conscience.
- To cause a *Weaker Christian* to sin against his/her conscience is itself a sin against Christ.

WHERE THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY HINDERS THE CHRISTIAN WORK BE WILLING TO GIVE IT UP IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE WORK.

- A *Stronger Christian's* practice of liberty in a disputed practice may destroy his/her influence over others in the church.
- The *Stronger Christian* (though himself free from narrow scruples) should be willing to be restricted and bound by the weakness of others that he/she might ultimately bring them to the enjoyment of the Christian liberty which he/she understands.
- Self-denial in terms of a disputed practice is an expression of self-discipline which every Christian should have if he/she intends to be successful in his/her Christian life.

THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MAY ENDANGER YOUR OWN CHRISTIAN WALK IF YOU DO NOT MAINTAIN CAUTION.

- Great privileges, such as Christian liberty in a disputed practice, and advantages (such as knowledge on a disputed practice) can lead to temptation and fall as demonstrated in history by Israel.
- Taking liberty in a disputed practice which in itself is not wrong may be the occasion for temptation (subtle and not understood) which may awaken desires and lusts which are sinful.
- The practice of Christian liberty may bring into the *Stronger Christian's* life something which displaces God as the object of supreme satisfaction and worship (idolatry).

I Corinthians 8–10 — PRINCIPLES TO APPLY IN DISPUTED PRACTICE cont

THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY CONCERNING A TAINTED MEATS ISSUE MAY IDENTIFY YOU WITH THE EVIL ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRACTICE SO THAT YOUR TESTIMONY IS WEAKENED.

- Some practices which are merely "disputed practices" under normal conditions, under other conditions may be actually wrong.

CONSIDER NOT ONLY WHAT IS ALLOWABLE BUT WHAT IS MOST PROFITABLE FOR THE WELFARE OF ALL IN DECIDING WHAT YOU WILL DO IN A GIVEN DISPUTED PRACTICE.

- Practice your liberty with regard to disputed practice under conditions when it will do no harm.
- If a non-Christian invites your participation in some disputed practice apart from the evil associated with it, go ahead and participate.
- If the evil association related to a disputed practice is brought up then don't participate in the practice.
- Be God-centered in all that you do.

acknowledgment

Though not quoted directly many ideas for principles were drawn from Charles Erdman's explanatory remarks in his commentary, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, p. 86–108, Westminster Press, Philadelphia.

Related Maps

Consensus Principle, 3
 How to Determine Principles from Scripture, 8
 Disputed Practice, 13
 Stronger Christian, 16
 Weaker Christian, 17

FEEDBACK ON MAJOR PASSAGES DEALING WITH DISPUTED PRACTICES

Question 1. Check the principles below which are principles drawn from disputed practices as seen in Romans 14 and I Cor 8–10.

- a. To cause a *Weaker Christian* to sin against his/her conscience is all right provided that you console him.
- b. Practices of moral indifference are much less important than essentials such as righteousness, peace, and joy.
- c. If a *Weaker Christian* does not recognize that a given practice is amoral then he/she should wise up and get it straight.
- d. Problems can be solved if we submit to the Lordship of Christ.
- e. Each person will answer to God for His own actions.
- f. The *Stronger Christian* should regulate his/her liberty with regard to the disputed practice by his/her regard for maintaining peace and helping to build up others.
- g. The *Weaker Christian* has the right to judge the *Stronger Christian* when the disputed practice is a "tainted meats issue."
- h. Be God-centered in all that you do.
- i. The Gospel should influence our relationships with others.
- j. Self-denial in terms of a disputed practice is an expression of self-discipline which every Christian should have if he/she intends to be successful in his/her Christian life.

Question 2. Identify whether the major principles listed below came from Romans (pure meats issue) or I Corinthians (tainted meats issue). Place either R (Romans) or C (Corinthians) or B (both) in the blank beside the principle..

- a. THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY MAY ENDANGER YOUR OWN CHRISTIAN WALK IF YOU DO NOT MAINTAIN AN ATTITUDE OF CAUTION.
- b. WHERE THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY HINDERS THE CHRISTIAN WORK BE WILLING TO GIVE IT UP IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE WORK.
- c. DO NOT JUDGE OTHERS IN MATTERS OF PRACTICE WHEN CONSCIENCE IS USED TO DETERMINE RIGHT OR WRONG.
- d. DO NOT CAUSE ANOTHER TO SIN AGAINST HIS/HER CONSCIENCE BY YOUR EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.
- e. THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY CONCERNING A TAINTED MEATS ISSUE MAY IDENTIFY YOU WITH THE EVIL ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRACTICE SO THAT YOUR TESTIMONY IS WEAKENED.
- f. SHOW MUTUAL FORBEARANCE AND LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER TO UNITEDLY PRAISE GOD.

ANSWERS-----

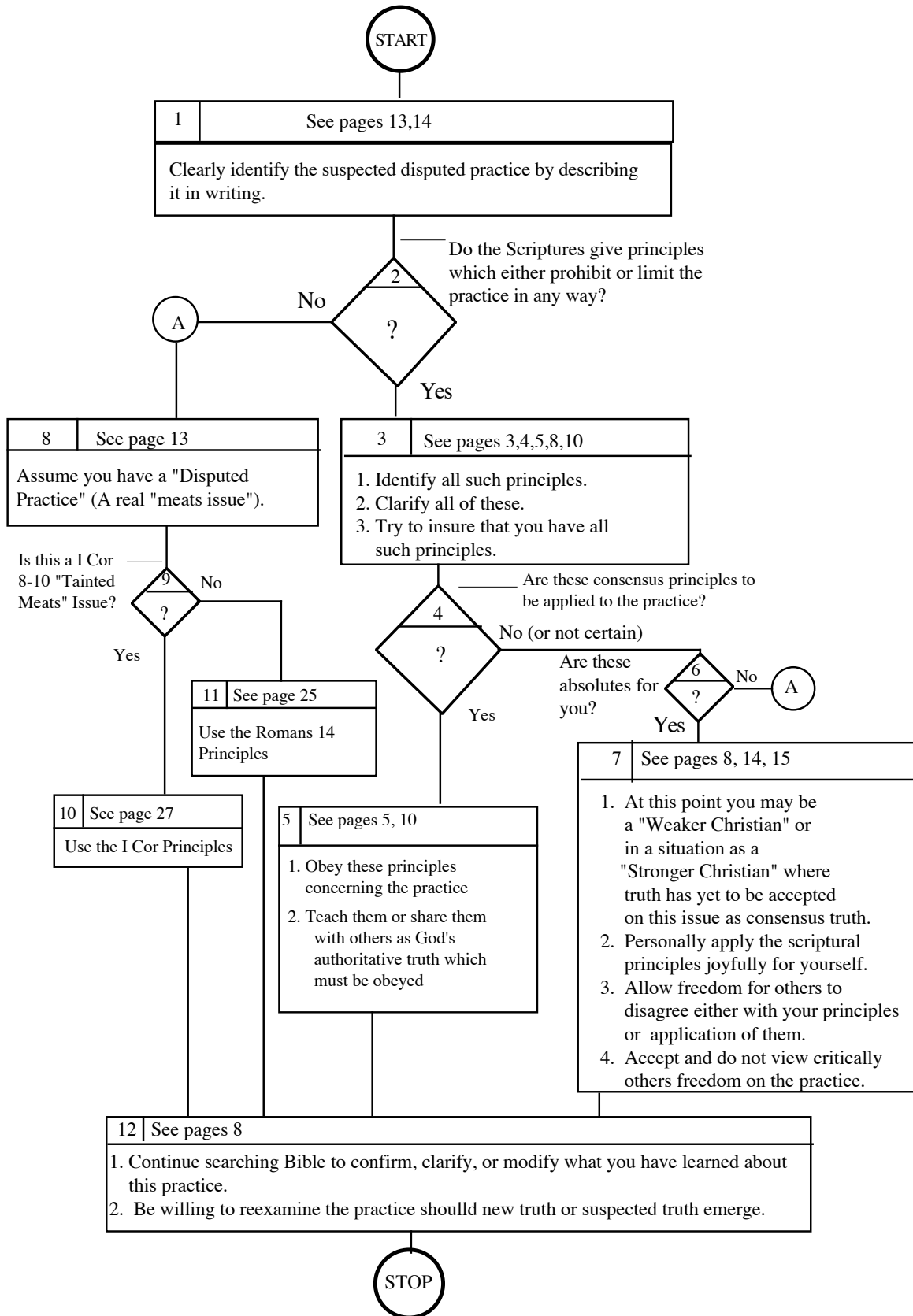
1. b e f h j
2. C a C b R c R d C e R f

PREVIEW: SECTION IV. ANALYZING A DISPUTED PRACTICE

introduction Section I gave the basic procedures for deriving principles from the Scriptures. Section II defined the concepts necessary to understanding and dealing with disputed practices. Section III gave a summary of the two major passages on disputed practices. Principles drawn from the passages were listed. With this background we are ready to use the procedural flowchart for analyzing a disputed practice. Section IV. gives the procedural flowchart and some suggestions concerning your putting into practice what you have learned concerning your analysis.

- objectives
- You will be able to use the flowchart to analyze a potential disputed practice.
 - You will be exposed to some suggestions affecting your putting into practice what you have learned from your analysis with the flowchart.

HOW TO ANALYZE A SUSPECTED DISPUTED PRACTICE



SOME CONSIDERATIONS AFTER ANALYZING A DISPUTED PRACTICE

introduction "In dealing with questions of moral indifference, as to which the answers of Christians equally good do not agree, Paul in theory defends Christian freedom but in practice he imposes severe restrictions. Thus, in this chapter, after stating clearly the problem concerning the use of meat which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, he states the first great principle, that liberty must be limited by love. He insists that difficult and delicate questions involved cannot be settled from the standpoint of knowledge and its rights, but must be determined by love and its obligations."³

some practical questions Though we as *Stronger Christians* may have the right to engage in a disputed practice it is not always wise or profitable to do so. Here are some practical questions to aid you as you consider your liberty with regard to the practice.

- How big a group is the *Weaker Christian* group?
- Do I have the opportunity for teaching them without quarreling?
- What will happen if I indulge? Will I lose my influence with my Christian friends?
- Am I willing to forgo this freedom?
- How best will love be demonstrated to all?

the proper spirit Paul demonstrated the proper spirit of approach to a "disputed practice."

I Cor 10:31–11:1

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give no occasion of stumbling either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: even as I also please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.

May we truly imitate Paul in our dealings with disputed practices.

³Erdman, Charles R., *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 89, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1966. Used by permission.

FEEDBACK ON USING THE DISPUTED PRACTICES FLOW CHART—SOME CASE STUDIES

instructions Use your flowchart and practical suggestions to help you decide what you would do in the following cases.

Question 1.

You are the pastor of a church in Montego Bay. The church has been growing well and is now in a building program to build a new sanctuary. Only \$1,000.00 is needed to complete the building but the church has really been drained and the progress has stopped. Several days ago, as pastor, you called an all-night prayer meeting to ask God's help in financing the final part of the building.

During the prayer meeting there was a sudden feeling sensed by all that God had met them. They knew he had heard their prayers. Two days went by without any sign of what God was doing. Then it happened! A businessman who had just recently become a Christian through your ministry invited you over for the evening. During the evening he said, "I've been impressed that God wants me to give you a gift but I don't know how much so I've decided to give you \$1,000.00. You were flabbergasted and joyously shared with him that his gift was the exact amount needed to finish the church building. It is his turn to be overjoyed and in his joy he proposed a toast. In a flash the bottles and glasses were out and the expensive wine was poured. What are you going to do?

I would _____

Because _____

Question 2.

You are in Italy as a missionary. There, it is considered right for Christians to drink wine. In fact, they always use real wine in communion services. Some poor people in the church feel so indebted to your ministry that they have been trying for weeks to find a way to repay you. Finally, they decided to invite you to dinner and spend the last of their wages on the best wine they can buy just for you. Then after the meal they serve you a small glass of wine to honor you.

Based on what you have learned about meats issues, what should you do?

Mark your answer: ___Partake (go on to A below) ___Refuse (go on to B below)

- A. Then, just as you are ready to take a drink a fellow missionary comes in and takes the glass from your hand and says, "You can't drink that, it's alcoholic."
Now what do you do?
- B. Then, just as you are ready to say "no" your fellow missionary turns up and says, "Hush up and drink it."
Now what do you do?

FEEDBACK ON USING THE DISPUTED PRACTICES FLOW CHART continued

Question 3

The Suntown Church is having an all church social get-together. It is an annual affair. As is the normal case the main attraction is a square dance. John Jones, a fairly new Christian has been attending Suntown Church for several weeks. He knows that you are a real Christian since your testimony at work speaks for itself. As a gesture of Christian friendship he has invited you to come to the square dance. Your calendar is free. What would you do?

I would _____

Because _____

Suppose the situation were changed slightly. The Suntown Church is a well-known liberal church which has no belief in the historical Christ or in salvation through the atonement. The annual affair is not a square dance but a disco affair held on the beach. Frequently, there is a good deal of drinking and all that follows when people get loosened up with drink. Now John Jones is a new Christian and has been invited to this Suntown Church social. He comes from a beach background. He asks you to come and says he will arrange for a date for you too. How do you respond?

ANSWERS-----

Your choice.