



Sermon Growth Guide

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ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT | Romans 14:16-18

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Key Verse: Romans 14:17 - "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit..."

Big Idea: The Kingdom of God is animated by the life-giving Holy Spirit, but that life grows and develops in an orderly way, guided by the character, wisdom and glory of God.

Foundations

Paul is still dealing with the controversial issue of whether meat offered to idols is permissible for Christians to eat. How does love navigate between personal freedom and concern for those in opposition? Paul lifts the vision of the Roman Christians to the higher plane of the Kingdom of God and underscores the foundational truth that God is ultimately concerned with eternal matters of righteousness, peace and joy, all of which are developed in God's people by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Understanding God's Word

Together read Romans 14:16-18.

Isn't it so easy to get distracted in life by disputes that ultimately turn out to be "tempests in a teapot"? Paul urges believers to focus on matters of eternal import. The Kingdom of God exists wherever God's rule holds full sway over His creation. As the Romans are tied up in knots over the "meat-eating" controversy, Paul exhorts them to realize that God's heart is not concerned with what they are "eating and drinking", but with whether they are cultivating righteousness, peace and joy through the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Paul uses this same argument with the Corinthian church. In their case, the issue has to do with talking the talk without walking the walk, spiritually speaking. Paul's admonition to them is, "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1Cor. 4:20). The goal for Christians is to pursue lives empowered by the Holy Spirit, focused on matters of eternal import and transformed into a character reflective of Jesus Christ.

Applying God's Word

Can you say in all honesty that "The Kingdom of God is more than issues related to..."

What you drink or eat?

Republican or Democrat Party?

Worship styles?

Tattoos and piercings?

Are you willing to let these and other secondary issues go in order to pursue fundamental gospel priorities? What issues do you tend to fixate on that take your eyes away from the Kingdom. How would you fill in the blanks, "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of _____, but of _____"?

Witnessing God's Word

Where do you see evidence of the Kingdom of God at work in the people and activities of First Pres? Where do you see secondary matters overruling Kingdom priorities in our midst? How could those missteps be rectified?

When the world looks at the Church (including First Pres), does it see a people whose priorities are aligned with God's vision as laid out in the New Testament, or a group of people who are not much different from any other group in society? What kind of testimony does our behavior convey to those outside the family of God? What if anything is the number one failure the Church needs to address to demonstrate that we are a people alive in the Spirit of God?