

Series: Community and Diversity; *Sermon:* **Not Causing Someone Else to Stumble**
Delivered by: **Dr. Josh Moody**, senior pastor; *Date:* **December 4, 2016**

Bible text explored: Romans 14:13–23

¹³Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

²⁰Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. ²²The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. [ESV]

Review and application:

College Church has employed this guideline, attributed to the fourth century bishop Augustine of Hippo: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” Earlier, Pastor Moody led us through a review of the gospel essentials in Romans 1–11.

1. What (v. 17) is Paul’s abbreviated restatement here of the kingdom-of-God essentials?
Is the peace mentioned here a subjective state of mind or an objective change of relationship? (See Romans 5:1 and 10.)
2. What issues dividing the church in Rome cited here illustrate how to deal with secondary matters?
3. Is having personal convictions about secondary matters (v. 14) criticized or affirmed by Paul?
But what role does one’s conscience play in individual behavior?
4. How (v. 15) could insisting on applying the freedoms of your personal convictions to someone with different limitations of conscience undermine his or her faith?
5. What potential downside for others in your church family (v. 16) does Paul see if you exercise your freedoms without restraint?
6. What (v. 18) are the results of concentrating on sharing the gospel essentials and not making an issue of non-essentials . . .
. . . in God’s sight?
. . . in the sight of other believers?
7. What deliberate effort will be required (v. 19) to be sensitive and courteous to those whose views differ from your own?
How does pushing one’s own agenda or finding fault on secondary matters—in conversation or over the internet—erode gospel unity?
8. What (vv. 20-23) should the “strong-faith” believer avoid for the sake of “the work of God”?
What should the “weak-faith” believer avoid for his or her own spiritual welfare?