



Vinton Baptist  
Church  
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Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>- 6:30 pm

## **Facing Life's Challenges**

Week 4- The Challenge of Authentic Spirituality

Romans 14:1-15

How do we work in the church and for God's kingdom, even when we disagree?

- The Early Church struggled with divisions and contentious disagreements over rules related to belief and practice.
- The same could be true of the church today? How do we disagree, but still work together?
- How do we have "authentic spirituality" and real Christian fellowship even when we don't agree?

### **1. The Situation Paul Faced**

\* Paul did not start the church in Rome.

-Paul had been told about the divisions in the church at Rome related to meat eating and Sabbath keeping.

-Some in the church believed in keeping the stricter Old Testament laws related to not eating meat and keeping the Sabbath.

-Others believed the new covenant provided freedom from these more stringent rules and regulations.

-Paul could relate to both groups- He had been a strict, rule following Pharisee, and he understood the freedom Christ offered.

\*For Paul, the issues of meat and the Sabbath were not worth splitting the church over. They were "weak" or marginal concerns not worth the division they were causing.

\*Paul wanted to offer a better way for the church at Rome to disagree by providing rules for authentic spirituality.

Resource: Poole, Charles E. and Cecil Sherman, *Facing Life's Challenges*  
(Macon, Georgia: NextSunday Resources, 2008)

## **2. Rules for Authentic Spirituality**

1. Have no contempt or judgment in your company. Do not exclude the weak, but rather welcome them. (Romans 14:1)
  - We should leave judgment to God. It is not our place to judge others.
2. Each person is allowed to sort out marginal issues. (Romans 14:5)
  - We all have a right to read and interpret Scripture.
  - As Baptists, we call this priesthood of the believer.
3. Not all issues merit division.
  - For Paul, the issue of eating meat and observing the Sabbath are not worth division.
4. The “strong” should not overpower the “weak,” and the “weak” shall not overpower the “strong.” (Romans 14:5 and Romans 15:1)
  - Christ died for all of us and our desire to be right should not blind us to Christ’s sacrifice for all.
5. Use two rules to make decisions:
  1. Does this honor the Lord? (Romans 14:6)
  2. Does this honor your neighbor? (Romans 14:5)

## **3. How Do We Live Out Authentic Spirituality?**

- \* Are we living a self-righteous religion or an authentic spirituality?
  - Are we being judgmental? Drawing lines in the sand? Being too certain, too dogmatic or wanting to much authority?
  - Are we allowing God to be the ultimate judge, teacher and the one responsible?
  - Are we offering grace, kindness, and compassion?
- \* Authentic spirituality is neither easy nor simple.
  - How can we practice more authentic spirituality? How can we nurture honoring God and honoring our neighbor over our desire to be right or in control?

Upcoming Wednesday Night Schedule:

10/20- Youth Pastor Search Presentation

10/27- Fall Festival and Trunk or Treat

11/3- Roanoke Country Prevention Council on Internet Safety by Nancy Hans

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