

Russell Kelfer

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

538-B

Series: The Beatitudes

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

We will continue our study of the sixth Beatitude,

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

(Matthew 5:8)

We are studying the third evidence of a pure heart, a clear conscience. There are three areas in which our consciences must be clear:

1- A clean conscience before God. The Scripture says that we are to be void of offense toward God and toward man. In the last lesson, we dealt with what it means to be void of offense toward God by coming to an understanding of I John 1:9, and by understanding what it means to confess our sins. We were reminded of these four questions:

1) Are we really confessing our sin, if our hearts are not convicted?

2) Are we really confessing our sin, if we are just about to be caught?

3) Are we really confessing our sin, if we don't stop sinning?

4) Are we really confessing our sin, if we don't really understand how the heart of God feels about that sin?

2- It means that there is no offense in our behavior that wounds another's conscience towards God. How do our lives affect the conscience of other Christians? If their conscience is wounded or confused by what we do, can we still have a clear conscience before God? The title of this lesson is "Am I My Brother's Conscience?" We will deal with three primary passages which are interrelated and intertwined. The Scriptures we will study are: I Corinthians 8, I Corinthians 10, and Romans 14. Our goal is to extract the principles, then experience the practical.

To update this concept into today's Christian society, I want you to consider your answers to the following questions. At the conclusion of this lesson, we will come back to them.

Question 1- Is it wrong to go to an R-rated movie if it doesn't cause spiritual conflict in your own heart? In other words, if you can handle it, is it okay?

Question 2- Is it wrong to watch television shows that you tell your children not to watch?

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

Question 3- Is it wrong to drink? Is it wrong to drink if you think you can handle it and have no scriptural conviction against it?

Question 4- Is language or slang that is nonoffensive to you acceptable for you to use around others?

Question 5- Should your standards of dress be affected by those around you?

Question 6- Is gluttony or overeating a sin before others, or does it only affect you?

Question 7- What is the greatest message that you can preach to a weaker Christian?

Question 8- Is the way you spend your money anyone else's business?

Question 9- Should spiritual experiences or doctrinal differences which may seem valid to you be shared with those who will be confused by what you share?

These are some practical questions that I would like to address in this lesson. Here is the basic principle: "Am I My Brother's Conscience?"

We are going to deal with three basic passages of Scriptures which are building blocks. They have four common denominators:

1- Conflict within the church body over minor issues such as eating food that is offered to idols.

2- Habits or customs clearly scripturally acceptable to some but violently opposed by others, bringing into focus the matter of conscience.

3- What the "stronger" Christians should or shouldn't do is not to be determined by what they "could or couldn't do" scripturally.

4- The one deciding issue is, if it might harm other Christians, don't do it.

I CORINTHIANS 8

From there, we will go through the three passages. We will first turn to I Corinthians 8 from the Amplified New Testament.

Now about food offered to idols: of course we know that all of us possess knowledge [concerning these matters. Yet mere] knowledge causes people to be puffed up (to bear themselves loftily and be proud), but love (affection and goodwill and benevolence) edifies *and* builds up *and* encourages one to grow [to his full stature]. (I Corinthians 8:1 Amplified Bible)

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

The issue of this passage is that meat offered to idols was being sold in the marketplace. It was being served in the priest's home, and it was being used in banquets and celebrations. The Christians in Corinth were at odds with each other, knowing that there were no real idols. Therefore, knowing that this meat had not been really touched by these gods, some of the stronger Christians knew it was okay to eat the meat. However, some weaker ones were stunned, hurt and confused. They may have come out of idol worship to Christ. Their conscience was grieved at the mere contact with meat involved in heathen practices.

The passage begins in a most peculiar way. Paul assumes that the Corinthians are doctrinally clear on the issue. He told them, that in itself, rather than being the solution, may be part of the problem. He said that knowledge without love puffs up. He literally is saying that knowledge without love is like an allergy. If you get too much, you will swell. Love is the antihistamine that God introduces into the system to give balance to it. Doctrine apart from love inflates the ego and crowds out other people. It condemns other people and creates disunity. It ascribes to the letter of the law and leaves out the heart. But love, that is applying the doctrine by ministering it to people, flows into others lives, considers them, ministers to them, creates unity in the body and ascribes to the intent of the law rather than the letter of the law.

This is what Paul was driving at in verse 1. He is saying that if man becomes impressed with his degree or his education or his knowledge, he needs to go back to school. But a man whose knowledge has made him quietly useful has really graduated.

So we see here an outline of I Corinthians 8. This is oversimplified, because all we are going to do with these passages is read through them and let you consider the outline, because I want to come back to the questions that are more practical.

I- The Issue of the Passage (verse 1)

II- The Intelligence of the People (verses 2-6)

III- The Essence of the Problem (verses 7-12)

II- The Intelligence of the People

Verses 2-6 deal with the intelligence and knowledge that the people possessed.

If anyone thinks he knows all the answers, he is just showing his ignorance.

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

But the person who truly loves God is the one who is open to God's knowledge. (I Corinthians 8:2,3 TLB)

In other words, the more you come to know, the more you ought to be humbled by what you don't know. This is the essence of wisdom. Let's continue,

So now, what about it? Should we eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god, and that there is only one God, and no other.

According to some people, there are a great many gods, both in heaven and on earth.

But we know better. We know that there is only one God, the Father, who created all things and made us to be His own; and one Lord Jesus Christ, who made everything and gives us life. (I Corinthians 8:4-6 TLB)

III- The Essence of the Problem

So what Paul is saying is that we all have knowledge. We understand the issue. But he begins with verse 7 and deals with the essence of the problem. I am going to read it from the Amplified Translation,

Nevertheless, not all [believers] possess this knowledge. But some, through being all their lives until now accustomed to [thinking of] idols [as real and living], still consider the food [offered to an idol] as that sacrificed to an [actual] god; and their weak consciences become defiled and injured if they eat [it].

Now food [itself] will not cause our acceptance by God nor commend us to Him. Eating [food offered to idols] gives us no advantage; neither do we come short *or* become any worse if we do not eat [it].

Only be careful that this power of choice (this permission and liberty to do as you please) which is yours, does not [somehow] become a hindrance (cause of stumbling) to the weak *or* overscrupulous [giving them an impulse to sin].

For suppose someone sees you, a man having knowledge [of God, with an intelligent view of this subject and] reclining at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged *and* emboldened [to violate his own conscientious scruples] if he is weak *and* uncertain, and eat what [to him] is for the purpose of idol worship?

And so by your enlightenment (your knowledge of spiritual things), this weak man is ruined (is lost and perishes)—the brother for whom Christ (the Messiah) died!

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

And when you sin against your brethren in this way, wounding *and* damaging their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Therefore, if [my eating a] food is a cause of my brother's falling *or* of hindering [his spiritual advancement], I will not eat [such] flesh forever, lest I cause my brother to be tripped up *and* fall *and* to be offended.

(I Corinthians 8:7-13 Amplified Bible)

I CORINTHIANS 10

Do you get the picture? It seems pretty clear. Let's go on to I Corinthians 10. We see here that we are dealing with a simple outline for this chapter.

I- The Issue of Meat - verses 19-22

II- The Meat of the Issue - verses 23-24

III- What Meeting the Issue Head-on Entails - verses 25-33

I- The Issue of Meat

So what does the issue of meat involve again? Let's start with verse 14,

So, dear friends, carefully avoid idol worship of every kind.

19 What am I trying to say? Am I saying that idols to whom the heathen bring sacrifices are really alive and are real gods, and that these sacrifices are of some value? No, not at all.

I am suggesting that what the pagans sacrifice they do offer in effect to demons, to evil spiritual powers and not to God at all. I do not want you to fellowship and be partakers by eating at their feasts.

You cannot drink the Lord's cup and the demon's cup. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the demon's table. So eating at these feasts with them is wrong.

Now shall we thus provoke the Lord to jealousy and anger and indignation?...

All things are legitimate and permissible. We are free to do anything we please. (How many Christians stop there?) But not all things are helpful, expedient, profitable or wholesome. All things are legitimate, but not all things are constructive to character and edifying the spiritual life.

Let one then not seek his own good and advantage and profit but rather let him seek the welfare of his neighbor.

As for meat offered to idols, eat anything that is sold at the meat market without raising any questions or investigations

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

on the grounds of conscientious scruples. (In other words, you don't have to go nosing around looking for trouble.)

For the whole earth is the Lord's and everything that is in it. In case one of the unbelievers invites you to their home and you want to go, eat whatever they serve you without examining it and without trying to make an issue of it or creating a problem.

But, if someone tells you this has been offered in sacrifice to an idol, do not eat it out of consideration to the person who informed you and for conscience sake.

I mean for the sake of his conscience, not yours. For why should another man's scruples apply to me and my liberty be determined by his conscience?

If I partake of my food with thankfulness then isn't everything okay?

So then, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you may do, do all for the honor and the glory of God.

Do not let yourselves be hindrances by giving offense to the Jews, to the Greeks or to the Christians. Do not lead others into sin by the way you live.

Just as I myself try to please to accommodate myself to the opinions, desires and interests of others, adapting myself to all men in everything I do, aiming at or considering not my own profit or advantage, but of the many in order that they might be saved. (I Corinthians 10:14, 19-33 paraphrased)

How What You Do Affects Other People - Romans 14

So once again the issue is clear. Paul is telling us very clearly that the issue is not what you do or don't eat. That is between you and God. The issue is how what you do affects other people. That is important.

Now turn to Romans 14. This chapter starts where these other passages left off with this thought about the weaker brother. Who is your weaker brother? This fellow has been talked about a lot already, and this chapter will discuss it even more.

As for the man who is a weak believer, welcome him...

(Romans 14:1 Amplified Bible)

Who is our weaker brother? Here are just a few illustrations of who he might be. There are four categories. Wuest says that the weak here means one who for a time is feeble but may become strong. This is your weaker brother.

1- He may be someone chronologically younger than you are.

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

They could be your children or your neighbor's children. What you do that would cause them to be offended or to follow after you, you are responsible for, regarding conscience's sake. It could be the young people in the church who look up to you. It could be those in a younger adult age bracket.

2- They may be those who are spiritually younger. They could be chronologically from conversion younger than you. Younger Christians may be looking at your life without you knowing it, and it could influence them for good or bad. It may be someone who is doctrinally younger due to not being in or being taught the Word. He doesn't understand what the Word teaches, so doctrinally he may be younger than you and looking to you for instruction, illustration or example. He may be someone who experientially hasn't been through the testing that you have. He is looking to you for the right example in situations. He may be someone who has not had the right moral training. He may not have been raised in a Christian environment. I don't like the phrase "Christian home" because it is not the home, it is the environment.

3- It may be someone who is immature or weak in a given area. It may be someone who because of their past life is immature. You may not think it will bother them for you to participate in an activity, but you don't know their past and it may be an area where they had a real problem before they became a Christian. It also may be a besetting sin that they have in their life. They may be looking for victory, and they see you do that very thing, and misinterpret your actions and don't think that victory is possible. It may be because of tradition or training. It may have been emblazoned on their heart that a certain thing is wrong by the way they were raised, the place they were raised or the church they were raised in. Their conscience is what is important to us.

4- He may be a person who looks to you for strength. It may be a disciple, or someone you minister to, maybe a pupil you teach. It may be anyone you work alongside of who sees you as a spiritual example. It may be the rest of your family.

These are the weaker brothers. Paul says that to the man who is a weaker brother,

...welcome him (the weaker brother) [into your fellowship]
but not to criticizing his opinions or pass judgment on his
scruples to perplex him with discussions.

(Romans 14:1 Amplified Bible)

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

Here is an outline of this chapter.

I- The Venture of Acceptance - verse 1

II- The Variable of Conscience - verses 2, 5-9

III- The Viciousness of Judging - verses 10-22

IV- The Vision of the New Order Jesus Has Given

I- The Venture of Acceptance

Romans 14 begins by telling us to open our arms to the weaker brother and love him. He is telling us that man's gateway into the kingdom is acceptance of Jesus Christ. The gateway into acceptance into your heart should be no less. Paul tells us not to welcome him into the fellowship to judge him and put him down but to love him and build him up.

II- The Variables of Conscience.

Pauls says,

2 One [man's faith permits him] to believe that he can eat anything, while a weaker one [limits his] eating to vegetables.

5 One man esteems one day is better than another, while another esteems all days alike [sacred]. Let everyone of you be fully convinced [satisfied] in his own mind.

He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

None of us lives to himself (but to the Lord), and none of us dies to himself (but to the Lord, for)

If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then whether we live or we die we belong to the Lord.

For Christ died and lived again for this very purpose, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

(Romans 14:2, 5-9 Amplified Bible)

What Paul is saying is that there are variable degrees of conscience in different people's lives. What may be right for you may not be right for me. What may be right for me may not be right for you. If there is no clear, Scriptural guideline, this principle will hold true. We have to accept and understand that fact. There is such a thing as a variable of conscience in the Christian faith within the body of Christ. We need to quit trying to put everybody into a little pocket and draw a box around them that says good, bad or otherwise.

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

III- The Viciousness of Judging

In verses 3,4 and 10-12 Paul gets to this point in the third aspect when he says that the viciousness of judging is wrong.

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:3,4 NKJV)

Why do you criticize *and* pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you look down upon *or* despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God [acknowledge Him to His honor and to His praise].

And so each of us shall give an account of himself [give an answer in reference to judgment] to God.

(Romans 14:10-12 Amplified Bible)

IV- The Vision of the New Order Jesus Has Given

Basically this is what Romans 14 is leading up to. Beginning with verse 13, we see a vision of the new order. It ties in with I Corinthians 8 and 10 so beautifully.

Then let us no more criticize and blame and pass judgement on one another, but decide and endeavor to never put a stumbling block or an obstacle or hindrance in the way of a brother.

I know and am convinced (persuaded) as one in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is [forbidden as] essentially unclean (defiled and unholy in itself). But [none the less] it is unclean (defiled and unholy) to anyone who thinks it is unclean.

But if your brother is being pained or his feelings hurt or he is being injured by what you eat, [then] you are no longer walking in love. [You have ceased to be living and conducting yourself by a standard of love toward him.] Do not let what you eat hurt or cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died!

Do not therefore let what seems good to you be considered an evil thing [by someone else]. [In other words, don't give an occasion for others to criticize what is justifiable to you.]

[After all,] the kingdom of God is not a matter of [getting the] food and drink [one likes], but instead, righteousness (that state which makes a person acceptable to God) and [heart] peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

He who serves Christ in this way is acceptable and pleasing to God and approved by men.

So let us then definitely aim for *and* eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual upbuilding (edification and development) of one another.

You must not, for the sake of food, undo *and* break down and destroy the work of God! Everything is indeed [ceremonially] clean *and* pure, but it is wrong for anyone to hurt the conscience of others *or* to make them fall by what he eats.

The right thing is to eat no meat or drink no wine [at all], or [do anything else] if it makes your brother stumble *or* hurts his conscience *or* offends or weakens him.

Your personal convictions [on such matters]—exercise [them] as in God's presence, keeping them to yourself [striving only to know the truth and obey His will]. Blessed (happy, to be envied) is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves [who does not convict himself by what he chooses to do].
(Romans 14:13-22 Amplified Bible)

These three passages speak so clearly for themselves that we don't really have to come back and dissect them. They, literally, all say the same thing. It is not what you do, it is how what you do affects your weaker brother. Your weaker brother is anybody who needs you as an example. Let's go back to our questions.

Question 1- Is it wrong to go to an R-rated movie, if it doesn't cause spiritual conflict in your own heart? In other words, if you can handle it, is it okay? We like the doctrine, it is just the application that we don't like. We need to remember that the doctrine is like an analogy, so we need to let the valve loose. Regarding a questionable movie or a questionable place, we need to know what to do.

Suppose a friend wants you to go to a nightclub, or a certain type of place with them that in itself holds nothing wrong for you. Let's say you want to go to an R-rated movie. You have been there before, and you know that you are spiritually mature and you can "handle it". Either you are self-deceived or you are mature. The question I want to ask is, are you sure your own standards are not dropping and this is not just self-justification?

Many Christians have come back from a movie recently and said, "It was a pretty good movie, except for a couple of scenes." They then go on to describe those scenes. Those scenes are things that ten years ago would not even been talked about in public.

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

We, as Christians, talked about them among one another, and we have sat through the whole movie, because there were just two or three bad scenes. How many times have you come back from a movie recently and said, "It wasn't bad except for the language."

Let's take the stance that you really can handle it, and you go to a R-rated movie with a spouse or a friend. What about the person with you? How many of you have taken your children to a movie you wish you hadn't? How many times have you taken a child to a movie with questionable language then go home and discipline them if they dare to use that language? They don't understand the double standard.

What about those people who see you? Suppose you are coming out of the movie and a new Christian or someone who looks up to you sees you coming out. They think it will be okay to go see that R-rated movie. They buy a ticket, and see the movie. Their conscience is shocked. They might get offended with us, they may just get confused before God. Or, they may change their standards, and their conscience, being weaker, may be defiled.

What about those people who just know where you have been? It never fails that your children want to know everything that happened, just like we do when they go out. The children ask about the movie, which one, and what it was about. The next day they may tell a friend or neighbor about the movie you saw. That friend or neighbor stumbles because of it.

Do you see the problem? Some of us need to learn to walk out of movies. It is true that sometimes we get drawn in by misleading advertising. It is a lot better testimony to your kids to get up and walk out than to sit all the way through it and then get home and tell them the bad things that were in it.

The same thing is true about a place. As a group you may say, "Let's go to this kind of nightclub or here or there." You know in your heart that you can handle it. It is not a big problem to you. It may be true that the building itself is not contaminated, and you may be "going as a witness", but most of the time I doubt it. There are other ways to witness. Some people may say they go to those kind of places, because they want to win their friends to Christ.

I Peter 4:1-5 gives us the principle we need to uphold. Peter tells us this is not the way to do it. The old friends are going to be confused and amazed that you don't do those things anymore. Let them come and ask you why. You can give them the reason of

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

the hope that is within you with meekness and fear. If they don't understand, it is between them and God. Someday they will. This passage is very clear that if we go to a questionable place and a weaker brother sees us, we are responsible. That is a different story.

Question 2- Is it wrong to watch television shows that you tell your children not to watch? You may say that your kids are small now, but when they grow up, they can watch these shows. This is true to a degree. This is true that television watching is a privilege. But, I'm not talking about the amount of time they watch, I'm talking about the material they watch. I'm not talking about privileges but morals. Have you ever told your child that a show is not appropriate, and they need to go to bed and you continue to watch. They come back downstairs to get a drink of water, and there you are watching the program you told them they couldn't. The children can become confused by the double standard of morals. Either it is morally right, or it is not. They will do as you say as long as they have to, but after that they will do as you do. The question is, is it worth it for us to turn it off rather than risk offending the little children. Jesus said it is better to have a millstone around your neck and be dragged into the sea than to be a source of offense to one of the little ones.

Question 3- Is it wrong to drink? Is it wrong to drink, if you think you can handle it and have no scriptural conviction against it? This is a tough issue. I don't like to talk about it, and it is hard for you to listen to. Probably no issue is as crucial in terms of testimony than the very issues we have been dealing with. For me personally, I don't find any place in Scripture that justifies my drinking. But this doesn't speak for you or condemn you, and I trust you won't condemn me. My basis on that is that the Scripture teaches, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is debauchery, but rather be filled with the Holy Spirit." Through the years I have found, and honestly believe, that alcohol is Satan's counterfeit for the Holy Spirit. It produces in the flesh everything the Spirit produces in the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience. Make a list sometime of the fruits of the spirit and see which ones alcohol produces and how it releases the inhibitions of the flesh.

I can't decide for you or judge you according to your position, and you can't me. However, in today's world, this issue has many parallels to the meat offered to idols issue of the first century. When someone becomes a believer, what does God first touch in their heart? What is the first thing they give up so often? Alcohol.

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

Why? Why is it that unbelievers will apologize to you when you come into a gathering, and they are drinking and they know you are a Christian? You don't have to say a word or condemn them in anyway. You can be enjoying yourself. Why do they continually apologize for their drinking?

I doubt if there is a more loving testimony in the world that Christ has changed you than there is right here. But, even if you think it is okay with you, to honor the principle of this passage, reconsider how you use the freedom you feel that you have. You and I know that many Christians, young Christians, weak Christians, prospective Christians have stumbled over this very issue. Maybe it is someone who has had a problem before they became a Christian. Maybe it is someone who has had problems with alcoholism in their family. Maybe it is someone whose background has forbidden it. When you use what you consider to be your freedom, and you may feel comfortable about it, remember if one drop causes your brother to stumble, it is not worth it. You can live without it, but you cannot live aright without the power of God in your life and without a clear conscience.

Lastly, I would remind you that though the parallels are similar, alcohol and meat offered to idols are not exactly the same. There were not any Meat Anonymous Clubs in the first century church. There were not many broken homes because people ate meat offered to idols. There were no recorded murders because of it. There were no recorded accidents. No recorded wasted lives over contaminated hamburger. What I want to point out is that the problem of alcohol runs much deeper than this issue, but it does touch on it. I would encourage you not to judge me, and I won't judge you because of the difference in our standards regarding alcohol. I want to ask you to consider next time you think about drinking, how it might affect the child in your home. Think about how it might affect your neighbor's child. Think about how it might affect that new Christian.

Question 4- Is language or slang that is non-offensive to you acceptable for you to use around others? I know this is a problem with a lot of Christians, particularly the "more mature Christians" who like to jest and joke about spiritual things. It is their whole life, and they tend to use clichés and crude language even applying to spiritual truths. They think it is okay, because the intent of their heart is right. They don't feel any guilt towards God over it. We need to be very careful because in the first place,

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

the Scripture is very clear about our language.

There are some groups in Christianity today that say we are free to express ourselves anyway we choose. If you feel led to use bad language, that it is okay, this is not true. Ephesians 4:29 in the Living Bible says, "*Do not use bad language.*" Ephesians 5:4 says, "*Dirty stories, foul talk and coarse jokes are not for you.*" Colossians 3:8 says, "*Throw off the garments of cursing and dirty language.*" The Scripture is very clear about that.

What about the middle ground? What about the jesting about things that are serious? What about the things that really aren't so bad? I want to share a story with you. When I was a very young Christian, I was invited to go on a mission trip with a group of older Christian men who I looked up to as spiritual fathers. We were in the airport in Miami to catch a plane. As we were standing in the group, the man I revered and admired the most began telling a story that bordered on obscenity. To him it was just a cute story. Being a young Christian, I was crushed by this man I really looked up to. I was wounded and grieved in my spirit. I cautiously went to him in the presence of the others, because I was very young and inexperienced. I told him that I didn't feel right about that story. They started laughing at me and said, "You'll get over it. There is nothing wrong with it. We all understood what it meant." They laughed it off and went on their way. It bothered me the whole trip. I wasn't offended at them, I was confused. My own conscience was defiled upon hearing the story. I was confused, because they were my examples, and I didn't know whether it was right or wrong. I don't remember much else about that trip except that incident in the airport and listening to that story.

Be careful about the language you use and the words you pick up from your peers. Be careful of the words you pick up at work or at school or in the neighborhood and take home. Our language ought to be above reproach, because we named the name of Jesus.

Question 5- Should your standards of dress be affected by those around you? I think this is true of women, in particular. If there is one person who is caused to stumble by what you wear, your wardrobe is a waste of time and money. It may be a man who can't stand the temptation. It may be a girl who is a new Christian and looks to you for her standards out of respect for you. It is wrong. It is not worth it. It may be okay for you to

Am I My Brother's Conscience?

wear a certain kind of bathing suit because it doesn't bother your conscience, but a young Christian who sees you may be offended, and it may bother theirs. It is not worth it.

Question 6- Is gluttony or overeating a sin before others, or does it only affect you? This is the same problem. Young Christians may be looking at you, disappointed that discipline is not an all-inclusive word in your life. They don't know how to relate the two. You may be telling them they have to be faithful in certain other areas all the while they see your whole body go out of control over food. We are accountable for our eating. I'm not talking about how heavy you are. Some of us can be heavy and eat nothing. Some of you can eat all day long and never gain a pound. I'm not talking about how much you weigh, I'm talking about how much you eat. Anything that becomes a controlling god in our lives affects the lives of everyone who watches us.

Question 7- What is the greatest message that you can preach to a weaker Christian? By now you may have guessed the answer. It is "I love you. Whatever might hurt you, hurts me, therefore I won't do it."

We have run out of time to deal with the last two questions, but by now I hope the principle is clear. To maintain a clear conscience before God, you do nothing that would wound the tender, sensitive conscience of one who is younger, newer in the faith or weaker in a given area. You are free to follow your conscience, but real freedom comes when knowledge is overshadowed by love and governs with excitement your behavior. In other words, let their conscience be your guide. *That indeed would be the evidence of a mature heart, a clear conscience and a pure heart before God.*

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer