

If the Bible doesn't say it's a sin... how do you know it is?

1- What if the Bible doesn't specifically tell you if something is a sin or not?

A. **Romans 14:1-4:** *“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”*

- (1) **In the beginning, before the Flood, man was a vegetarian. After the Flood, God told Noah he could eat meat, according to Genesis 9:2-4:** *“The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.”*
- (2) **When Moses received the Old Law with the 10 Commandments, God changed things again, according to Leviticus 11, giving an entire list of foods that were considered “clean” (ok to eat), and “unclean” (forbidden to eat).** The Jewish Christians still held to this list of foods they could and could not eat, even after the New Testament was created through Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, during the time when the Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans.
- (3) **Jesus made it clear to the Jews that this list of “clean” and “unclean” foods from God was only a command during the Old Covenant, and that it was no longer a command for Christians under the New Covenant, according to Mark 7:18,19:** *“Are you so dull?” Jesus asked, ‘Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean? For it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and then out of his body.’ In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean’.”*
- (4) **After Christ resurrected and started the New Testament Church, He made it clear a second time to Peter, according to**

Acts 10:9-15: "...Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw Heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.'

'Surely not, Lord!' Peter replied. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.'
The voice spoke to him a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean'."

(5) Paul also made it clear to the Gentile Churches in Romans 14:20 of the New Covenant: "...all food is clean..."

(a) Christians were no longer under the Old Covenant list of *clean* and *unclean* foods found in **Leviticus 11**. They were only to "*abstain from food polluted by idols...and from the meat of strangled animals and from blood,*" according to **Acts 15:20**.

(6) But, just because God now gives us permission to eat and drink whatever we want, that doesn't necessarily mean we should, according to I Corinthians 6:12: "Everything is permissible for me --- but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food for the stomach and the stomach for food --- but God will destroy them both."

(a) Some foods and drinks can become habit forming and end up controlling us. Is there anything you eat or drink that you are possibly addicted to?

(b) Some foods and drinks become so addictive, we can't stop eating and drinking them; and we start literally eating and drinking ourselves to death.
Philippians 3:19: "*Their destiny is destruction, their god (master) is their stomach, and their glory is their shame.*"

(7) When deciding what you should or should not eat or drink, remember God's warning in I Corinthians 3:16,17: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's Temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's Temple, God will destroy him; for God's Temple is sacred, and you are that Temple."

B. Romans 14:5,6: *“One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each man should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord.”*

(1) The Jewish Christians still felt that the Sabbath Day (Saturday) was a Holy Day (as the 10 Commandments of the Old Covenant stated, in *Exodus 20:8*). They believed that even as Christians, there should still be no work done on this special day (including cooking of meat, and preparing meals). The Gentile Christians felt every day was the same, and they didn't have to observe the Sabbath Day as a special Holy Day anymore (now that they were under the New Covenant). After all, according to *Matthew 12 and Luke 6*, Jesus, Himself, worked, and prepared meals on the Sabbath Day.

C. Romans 14:6-13: *“...He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains (vegetarian), does so to the Lord, and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God.' (Isaiah 49:18).

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another.”

2- If you think it is wrong, then for YOU it is wrong. But if the Bible doesn't specifically talk about it --- it becomes a disputable matter, and you cannot judge your fellow Christian, who may think it is OK.

A. Romans 14:13-15: *“...Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.”*

3- Don't allow what you think is OK to be spoken of as if it were a sin. If your fellow Christian thinks it is wrong for Christians to eat, drink, say, wear, watch, or do something that you think is OK --- don't eat, drink, say, wear, watch, or do it in front of them!

A. Romans 14:16-19: *“Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

4- Don't do anything that would cause your fellow Christian to fall back into sin!

A. Romans 14:20-21: *“Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble (fall back into sin). It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.”*

(1) I Corinthians 8:4-13: *“So then, about eating meat sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’), yet for us, there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such meat, they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brother in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.”

(a) In Corinth, the workers all had their meals together. Before the meal was served, they would have a prayer and sacrifice to the master's (employer's) god. The sacrificed animal(s) then became the main course for the meal. When these Corinthians became Christians, they no longer took part in such meals, because they no longer served those gods, and felt that if they did take

part in the meal, they would be betraying Jesus Christ and the only true God.

Other Christians who would be more mature in the faith, didn't believe in such gods, and so, to them, it was just a cheap meal (not a worship service).

However, when the young Christians who were just converted from those gods to Christianity, saw these more mature fellow Christians partaking in such meals, they figured it must be OK to worship God, and continue worshipping their old gods as well, through these idols and meals. As a result, they fell back into their past sins trying to worship both God and idols at the same time.

- (b) If an alcoholic becomes a Christian, and sees you (his fellow Christian) going into a restaurant with a bar, which for him was a temple of demons where the altar was full of booze (idols), and where he often worshiped into a drunken stupor --- will he not figure it would be OK for him, as your fellow Christian, to return to such a place?

You might never drink anything from that bar (his old temple of idols); and simply go there for a good meal; but, **WHAT IF HE RETURNS TO THIS PLACE BECAUSE, BY YOUR EXAMPLE, YOU GAVE HIM THE "OK?" Will he drink again (and fall back into the sin of drunkenness? If he does, who will God hold accountable for his "fall?"**

- 5- Whatever you believe about a disputable matter (not covered in the Bible), keep between yourself and God. Your disputable matter may not be a sin to you, but it may lead a younger Christian (who's faith is not as strong as yours is) back into sin!**

A. Romans 14:22: *"So, whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves."*

- (1) **Luke 17:1-3:** *"Jesus said to His disciples: 'Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves'!"*

- (2) **Before you open your mouth and approve something as "OK," and "definitely not a sin," read Matthew 12:36,37:**

“But I (Jesus) tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

6- So, how do I know if it is a sin for me, if it is not covered in the Bible? If you have doubts --- DON'T DO IT!

A. Romans 14:23: *“but the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.”*

B. So, how am I supposed to know if what I do offends anyone? If it is not in the Bible, and it is a “disputable matter,” how can I be responsible for what other people think?

(1) I Corinthians 10:23-33: *“Everything is permissible --- but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible --- but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

***Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience** (asking if this meat was sacrificed to an idol; or will I cause someone to stumble if I eat this?), for the earth is the Lord's and everything in it.*

*If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. **But if anyone says to you, ‘This has been offered in sacrifice,’ then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience sake --- the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours.** For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? If I take part in a meal with thankfulness (to God), why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?*

So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble (fall into sin), whether Jews, Greeks, or the Church of God --- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many, so that they may be saved.”

7- Remember II Corinthians 6:3: *“We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.”* PEOPLE WATCH CHRISTIANS...ESPECIALLY CHILDREN!