

Four positions Christians take on debatable practices

What do you mean—debatable practices?

- They are issues of Christian living about which Christians in good conscience and faith can come to different practices.
- They are practices which are not definitively covered by biblical command, prohibition, or principle.
- In the New Testament era, eating meat that may have been sacrificed to an idol and whether to observe certain days as holier than others were debatable issues.
- Today, it might be where to draw the line on entertainment, standards of modesty in dress, alcohol consumption, or any number of other issues.
- **See Romans 14:1-23; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Colossians 2:16; Galatians 2:11-14**

The Professing Weaker Brother

How to tell if you are one:

- You think it is a sin for you, and that it must therefore be a sin for everyone.
- If you spot or hear about a fellow Christian engaged in the activity, you think less of them and may claim that they have caused you to stumble.
- Wild horses could not drag you into the activity. You would sooner die.

The possible danger:

becoming a “let-my-conscience-be-your-guide” moralist who shrinks grace and promotes legalism.

What do we do with you?

- We should not temper our exercise of liberty in Christ just to avoid your disapproval.
- In fact, you are to be confronted, and your influence on the genuinely weaker brothers should be curtailed.

The Genuinely Weaker Brother

How to tell if you are one:

- You vacillate on whether it is a sin or not—you’re not sure whether it’s right or wrong.
- If you spot or hear about a fellow Christian engaged in the activity, you think that maybe it’s OK after all, and so you do it too.
- Then the old doubts come back, and you feel awful for sinning against God.

The possible danger:

mediocre progress in discipleship and lack of confidence before God because of always struggling with this issue.

What do we do with you?

- We should never goad or embolden you to sin against your conscience.
- However, you should be educated about the biblical teaching (or lack thereof) on the issue. There is no reason for anyone to remain a weaker brother.

The Nonparticipating Mature Brother

How to tell if you are one:

- You can see how some come to a different practice based on the biblical data, but you simply cannot participate without feeling you have sinned against God.
- OR, you recognize that you have the freedom to participate, but choose not to do so for some higher purpose.

The possible danger:

believing that participating believers would be more spiritual if they would only limit the use of their liberties.

What do we do with you?

- We should not goad or attempt to embolden you to sin against your conscience.
- We are to respect your position, whether or not we agree with your reasons or share your practice.

The Participating Mature Brother

How to tell if you are one:

- When you consider the biblical data, you believe that the activity is not sin.
- You are not, however, an active advocate for your practice. You respect the nonparticipating mature brother, and protect the genuinely weaker brother.
- Since the exercise of liberty is contextual, you use wisdom in its exercise.

The possible danger:

1) caving to the professing weaker brother, 2) emboldening genuinely weaker brothers to sin against their conscience.

What do we do with you?

- We should not restrict your freedom in order to achieve uniformity of practice, or avoid disapproval.
- We are to respect your position, whether or not we agree with your reasons or share your practice.