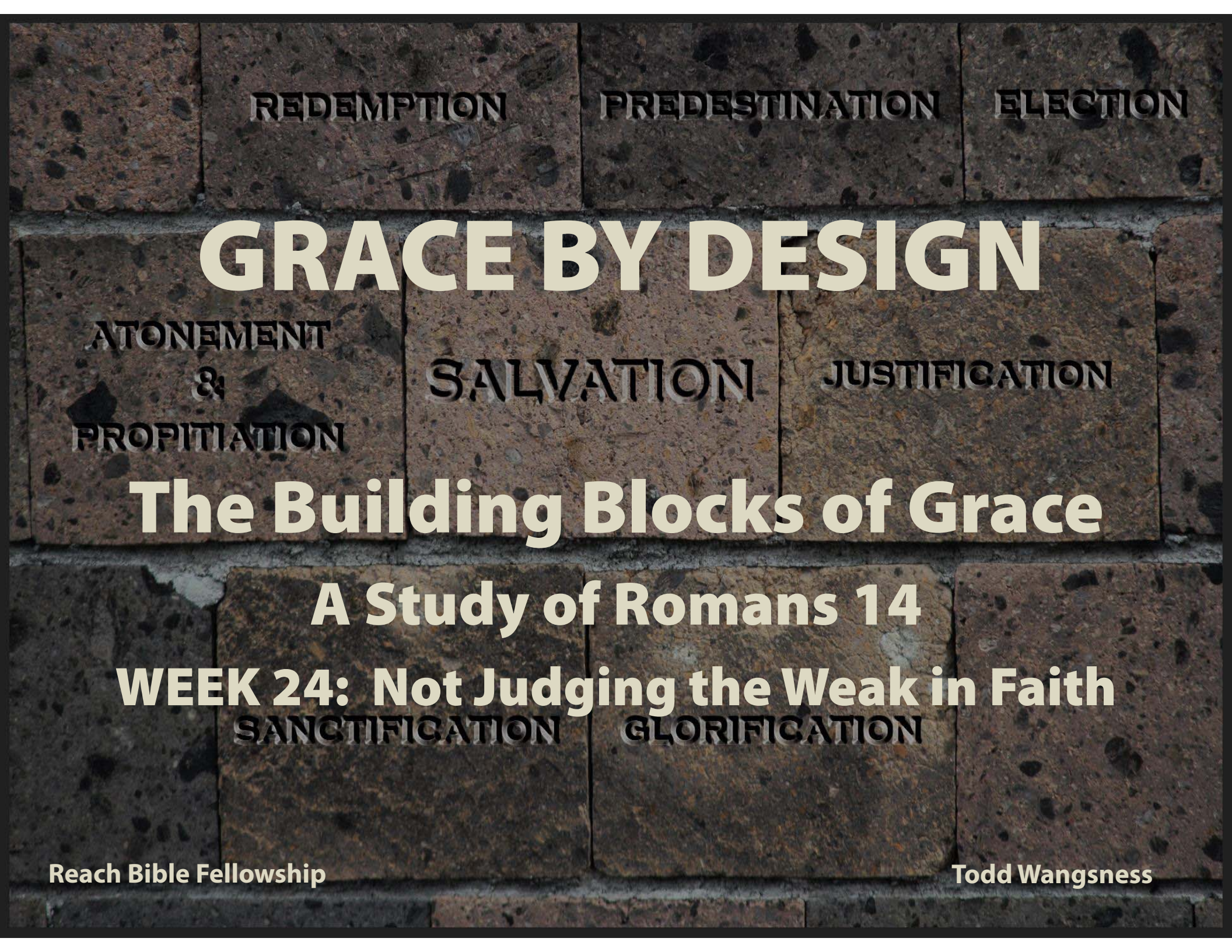

REDEMPTION
PREDESTINATION
ELECTION
GRACE BY DESIGN
ATONEMENT & PROPITIATION
SALVATION
JUSTIFICATION
The Building Blocks of Grace
A Study of Romans 14
WEEK 24: Not Judging the Weak in Faith
SANCTIFICATION
GLORIFICATION
Reach Bible Fellowship
Todd Wangsness

Grace By Design: Study Outline

Week 1:	Romans	Overview of Grace and Salvation
Week 2:	Rom 1:1 – 1:17	Introduction to Romans
Week 3:	Rom 1:18 – 2:16	Justification – Ignorance is not an Excuse
Week 4:	Rom 2:17 – 3:20	Justification – Knowledge isn't Good Enough
Week 5:	Rom. 3:21 – 3:24	Justification – Righteousness of God Revealed 1
Week 6:	Rom. 3:25 – 3:31	Justification – Righteousness of God Revealed 2
Week 7:	Rom. 4:1 – 4:25	Justification – Faith vs the Law
Week 8:	Rom. 5:1 – 5:11	Sanctification – Peace with God 1
Week 9:	Rom. 5:12 – 5:21	Sanctification – Peace with God 2
Week 10:	Rom. 6:1 – 6:14	Sanctification – The Christian's Struggle with Sin 1
Week 11:	Rom. 6:15 – 6:23	Sanctification – The Christian's Struggle with Sin 2
Week 12:	Rom. 7:1 – 7:25	Sanctification – The Law Can't Save (But the Spirit Can!)
Week 13:	Rom. 8:1 – 8:17	Sanctification – Life in the Spirit
Week 14:	Rom. 8:18 – 8:30	Glorification – From Suffering to Glory
Week 15:	Rom. 8:31 – 8:39	Glorification – God's Everlasting Love
Week 16:	Rom. 9:1 – 9:33	Israel's Rejection and God's Purpose
Week 17:	Rom. 10:1 – 10:13	Israel and the Mystery of the Church 1
Week 18:	Rom. 10:14 – 10:21	Israel and the Mystery of the Church 2
Week 19:	Rom. 11:1 – 11:36	The Salvation of the Jewish people
Week 20:	Rom. 12:1 – 12:2	Living the Transformed Life
Week 21:	Rom. 12:3– 12:8	Gifts of the Spirit
Week 22:	Rom. 12:9– 12:21	The Christian Walk
Week 23:	Rom. 13:1 – 13:14	Love Fulfills the Law
Week 24:	**Rom. 14:1 – 14:21**	**Not Judging the Weak in Faith**
Week 25:	Rom. 15:1 – 15:25	Bearing One Another's Burdens
Week 26:	Rom. 16:1 – 16:25	Conclusion and closing remarks

Grace By Design: Not Judging the Weak in Faith

Notable quotes on Romans Chapter 14

"The kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking. It's about righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. This is the great issue in life: How do you pursue righteousness, peace, and joy? Not by insisting on your freedoms to eat and drink what you want, but by being willing to give up your freedoms for the sake of others. The kingdom is about love, and love is about serving others, not asserting your rights. Paul says in verse 19, 'Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.' That's the goal—building each other up, not tearing each other down over secondary issues."

- **John Piper**

"Paul's emphasis in Romans 14:17, that 'the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,' is a profound reminder that the essence of Christian living transcends external practices. The kingdom is not about asserting one's freedom to eat this or that, or to observe certain days, but about embodying the righteousness of God, fostering peace within the community, and experiencing the joy that comes from the Spirit's presence. This verse calls us to focus on what truly matters—living in a way that reflects God's character and promotes harmony among believers, even when we differ on non-essential matters."

- **F. F. Bruce**

Grace By Design: Not Judging the Weak in Faith

Romans Chapter 14 Overview

- **Verses 1-4: Accepting the weak in faith**
  - He instructs the strong not to despise the weak and the weak not to judge the strong, as both are accepted by God. Each believer serves God and will give an account to Him.
- **Verses 5-12: Acting According to Conscience**
  - Paul extends the principle to observing days, noting that each believer should be "fully convinced in his own mind" (v. 5). Whether one observes a day or eats certain foods, it should be done "to the Lord" with thanksgiving.
  - Paul warns against judging or despising a brother, as all will stand before God's judgment seat (v. 10). He quotes Isaiah 45:23 to affirm that every knee will bow to God, reinforcing individual accountability to God, not to one another.
- **Verses 13-18: Avoiding Stumbling Blocks**
  - He stresses that love requires sacrificing personal freedoms to protect a weaker brother's conscience (v. 15).
- **Verses 19-23: Pursuing Peace and Edification**
  - He advises keeping one's convictions private before God if they might cause division (v. 22). Acting against one's conscience is sin, as "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (v. 23).

Grace By Design: Not Judging the Weak in Faith

Accepting the weak in faith

14:1-4 ***Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 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. 4 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.***

- ***"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables."***
  - **The early church had a mix of Jews and gentiles. The Jews had strict dietary laws that prohibited certain foods.**
  - **So, there was contention within the church among members who felt freedom to eat these meats and those that believed they should not**

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- ***"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."***
  - **Paul is saying that – regardless of their personal convictions – neither should judge the other**

- ***"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."***
  - **The Lord is our Master … He is Lord over the one who thinks we shouldn't eat certain things; and He is Master over the one that believes we have the freedom to eat all things.**
  - **If an individual's understanding is incorrect, God is able to work with him to correct misunderstandings**

- **Paul was not concerned about whether we should partake of certain foods or not**
  - **He was much more concerned about our respective attitudes towards each other**
  - **There is not to be dissention within the Body of Christ**

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- Strong believers are to receive their weaker brothers and sisters, but not for the purpose of correcting or disputing with them about their beliefs
- Weak believers are not to condemn their brothers for the freedom they enjoy
- God accepts both types of believers!

What is Legalism?

- Legalism is the act of imposing a set of rules not explicitly mentioned in scripture upon another
- Legalism had (and continues to have) strong roots in Judaism
- The modern church still suffers from legalistic attitudes and expectations of DO's and DON'Ts that are not specifically addressed in the New Testament
  - Working on Sunday, the Sabbath or other Jewish holy days
  - Playing cards, dancing
  - Clapping or raising hands in church (or not doing so!)
  - Consumption of alcohol
  - Certain attire, head-coverings, skirt lengths, tattoos, makeup
  - Etc.

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- **When a church or individuals within the church judge a believer's faith and spirituality on the basis of laws or rules not found in scripture, that church or those individuals have become legalistic!**

- **Obedience to man-made rules and regulations may make a person look spiritual on the outside … but it changes NOTHING on the inside!**
  - ***Mat 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."***
  - ***Col 2:13-14 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.***
  - ***Col 2:20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.***

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Acting According to Conscience

14:5-6 ***One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.***

- **Paul gets to the heart of the matter … it's not so much what we DO, it's our attitude towards honoring God!**
- **As long as there is not a specific directive in the New Testament regarding doing or not doing something, we have freedom**
  - **With the caveat that – whatever we do or don't do – should honor God!**
  - ***1 Cor 10:23-24,31 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being … 31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.***

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14:7-12 *For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.*

- *"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."*
  - **We don't have the right to judge other believers on non-essential matters**
  - **Nor do they have the right to judge us**
  - **However, ALL BELIEVERS will someday soon stand before the judgment seat of Christ … and He will judge us regarding our thoughts and actions in this life**
  - **We are only accountable to Him!**

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Avoiding Stumbling Blocks

14:13-14 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. 14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

- **Now Paul turns his focus to the "strong believer"**
  - **"Stumbling block": Greek '*proskomma*'. An obstacle in the way which if one strikes his foot against he stumbles or falls**
  - **Our freedom cannot be the cause of a weaker brother stumbling**
  - **If I have the freedom to enjoy a glass of wine or an apertif, and I know that a brother previously had a weakness for alcohol … I cannot and must not exercise my 'freedom' in front of them.**
    - **Our love for our brother or sister is paramount!**
    - **We are not to be the cause of a brother in Christ to fall back into sin!**

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14:15-18 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

- *"Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died."*
  - **Paul is not stating a "commandment" here, rather he is describing the use of discernment regarding the effect our actions may have on a brother or a sister**
  - **If we partake of something that others consider to be morally reprehensible in front of them … even though there is not a commandment against it, we may grieve the other person and cause them to stumble in their faith**
  - **I grew up in a 7th day church that observed the Old Testament dietary laws**
    - **Out of respect for my father, I would not eat "unclean" foods in front of him, as it would "grieve" him**

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Pursuing Peace and Edification

14:19-21 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak

- **Non-moral issues are not worth potential divisions within the body or congregation**
- **Our focus and priority as a believer in Christ is to "love one another"**
- **We should willingly sacrifice our freedom out of love for our brother and to maintain unity within the Body of Christ**
- *1 Cor 8:9-13 "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. 10 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? 11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."*

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14:22-23 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

- **Paul is telling us to live according to our conscience!**
- **If we are partaking in an activity which impinges our conscience, then it is SIN for us to partake!**

Grace By Design: Not Judging the Weak in Faith

Questions to Ponder

1. In view of the earlier chapters in Romans, how does Chapter 14 fit in to the subject of Romans?
   - What does the topic of 'not judging weak in faith' have to do with grace and our right standing before the Lord?
2. Some people take offense at others' actions quite easily
   - What do we do in the event someone takes offense at something we do that has no prohibition in scripture? Something that the offended person isn't going to "stumble" over, but they become full of self-righteous indignation against us?
3. We discussed using discernment to guide us in choosing what activities with which we are involved?
   - Describe some situations where discernment may be required?
4. Let's talk about legalism …
   - What are some examples of legalism within the church you have encountered?