

BALANCING GRACE WITH LOVE
PUTTING GRACE INTO ACTION
ROMANS 14:1–12



The Heart of the Matter

We do not live and die only unto ourselves. This is true of humanity but particularly true of Christians. Believers in Christ are interwoven and interrelated, comprising an interdependent system of cells and nerves, muscles and limbs in the same body—the body of Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Bible frequently emphasizes the importance of unity among the Lord’s people. However, no one can deny the presence of diversity in God’s family. We know the value of unity, yet we cannot ignore the reality of diversity. And therein lies “the rub”! Because of the weak believer’s human tendency to judge those who don’t embrace his or her customs and convictions and, on the other hand, because of the strong believer’s decision to discount judgments passed by those who find fault in his or her expressions of freedom, conflict emerges and persists. The solution is to put grace into action.



Discovering the Way

1. Cultural Conflicts: Then and Now

Frequently, at the core of conflicts, there are cultural issues or matters of custom and conviction.

2. Personal Categories: Weak and Strong

The weak are often rule followers and tend to judge others’ freedoms, while the strong are often “rule breakers” and tend to discount others’ strict convictions.

3. Crucial Issues: Legalism and Liberty (Romans 14:1–6)

Both the weak and the strong must learn to accept the others’ convictions regarding diet and days.

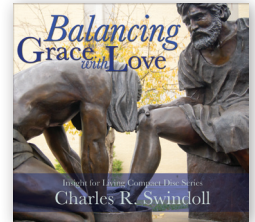


Starting Your Journey

Practical principles that are wise and workable (Romans 14:7–12) include a life of grace that begins with acceptance. An attitude of grace requires releasing others—letting the Lord direct their lives—and a commitment to grace means we never assume roles we’re not qualified to fill.



Tools for Digging Deeper



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BALANCING GRACE WITH LOVE

LIBERTY ON A TIGHTROPE

ROMANS 14:13–23



The Heart of the Matter

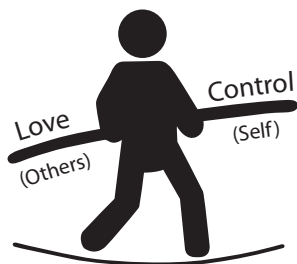
Balance. That's the ticket. While Christ is the bulwark of balance, our Adversary is the expert of extremes. He will do anything to disturb our spiritual equilibrium, move us off center, and tempt us into an out-of-balance lifestyle that is "too much." For example: Christian liberty. God's desire is that we, His people, enjoy fully our freedom in Christ. However, there must be self-imposed boundaries, or we will become self-serving, independent-minded, and careless rebels who have no regard for others. The last eleven verses of Romans 14 address this issue.



Discovering the Way

1. Correct Stance: To Get Us Started (Romans 14:13)

The secret of staying free is keeping love for others and control of self in constant balance.



2. Three Reminders: To Keep Our Balance (Romans 14:14–20)

A balanced believer realizes that nothing is unclean in and of itself (Romans 14:14–16), that the essence of Christianity is not external but eternal (14:17–19), and that when liberty hinders God's work, we must yield (14:20).



Starting Your Journey

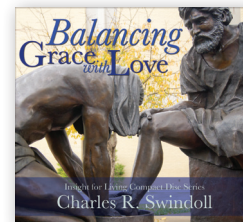
Three practical warnings will guard us from stumbling. First, be considerate (Romans 14:21). Second, be convinced (14:22). And third, be consistent (14:23).



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