Text: I Corinthians 8:1-3; 10:31-11:1
Title: "High Definition Living … Knowledge Packaged with Love"

INTRODUCTION

Now take out your Bibles and open them to I Corinthians 10:31. This morning I'm beginning a series of messages from I Corinthians 8-10 entitled "High Definition Living." Living in such a way that the glory of God is seen clearly as it ought to be seen through our lives. High Definition Living means that I'm living my life to accurately reflect the glory of God.

> **ILLUSTRATION** – Now if you're not familiar with the term "high definition," it will probably be just a matter of time before it is a household word, at least to the way you think about your television at home. In non-engineering terms high-definition potentially offers a much better picture quality than, say, your standard television. High definition broadcasts offer a greater clarity. The picture on screen will be less blurred, less fuzzy. Hi Def also brings to us smoother motion, richer and more natural colors, and awesome sound. The image details on screen will be more vivid that your eye has ever detected. Looking at your television screen or video screen will be more like looking through a window to your backyard, than looking at a screen.

Well, I could think of no better way to describe for you the desire of God to display His glory in and through all His creation.

Let's start with …

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) - So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

NOTE: We're going to memorize this verse over the next few weeks. So see if you can beat your parents. So let's just read it out loud together.

ILLUSTRATION – Two weeks ago on Easter Sunday, the famous Masters Golf Tournament had a thrilling conclusion. A relatively unknown golfer by the name of Zach Johnson from Cedar Rapids, Iowa came to the final round of at Augusta National Golf Club just two shots behind the leader Stuart Appleby and one behind four-time Masters champion Tiger Woods, the heavy favorite to win the tournament. Zach Johnson got hot on the back nine; he took the lead with an amazing run of birdies on holes 13, 14 and 16. No one could catch him.

> As they slipped on the prized green jacket that Masters winners wear, Zach Johnson took the opportunity to speak for His Lord: "Being Easter, my goal was the glorify God and hopefully I did that today.

You see, that's what God calls us to do with our lives. In the way we live the world should see God's glory in high definition.

1 Chronicles 16:24 - Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

God is dishonored when anyone sins. But God is particularly dishonored when His people live lives that fall short of His glory … when the people around us do not see His glory in Hi Def.

Rom 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Our godly living, in light of our redemption, brings honor and glory to Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:20 (NIV) - You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Now back to I Corinthians 10:31. Now of all the things that you could think of that brings glory to God, is it a little strange that Paul would say …

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) - So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

"Whether you eat or drink…" – In all the issues of life, I have one governing principle … the glory of God … the honor of God. Even in the most mundane, routine, even unspiritual things we do every day, like eating and drinking, the glory of God is to be reflected in the way we live our lives. God's glory is to be our life commitment.

And it's not just in eating and drinking, it is in "whatever you do" that we are to bring glory to God. We're talking High Definition Living … living that clearly defines the glory of God.

But there is a very specific issue that Paul has in mind here, and it's important for us to see the context of this powerful challenge.

Turn back to the beginning of this section in I Corinthians 8:1. Let's just read the first three verses to get rolling. Read text.

Now all of this begins with a letter that was sent from Corinth to Paul in Ephesus asking about a number of hot-button issues. We can identify these issues by Paul's phrase "Now concerning…" or "Now about…" We have dealt with one of them already in our study of I Corinthians in 7:1 related to marriage. And here in 8:1 we are introduced to another.

You see there is an issue that came up that was rather controversial for our first century friends. They lived in an environment of rampant idolatry. Most people in this part of the world, when they came to Christ, came out of a background in pagan idol worship. And there were some things about that that confused them, and divided the church.

So let's take a look at …

1. THE CULTURAL <u>SITUATION</u>

1 Corinthians 8:1a (NIV) - Now about food sacrificed to idols…

Now here's a scenario that might very well take place: You have a friend who invites you to a party … a barbecue. It's a rather large occasion and so you're host has booked a "banquet room" at the temple of his favorite god or goddess. The evening begins with the usual festivities. First a bull is slaughtered as an offering to the gods. If you wish, you can join the procession beneath the slaughtering platform to allow the bull's blood to drip on you, so the strength of the bull will pass into you, as the pagan worshippers believed. They also believed that the strength of that bull will be transferred to you when you eat it the meat. You can easily see how such an invitation would leave you in a quandary if you happened to be a Christian in first century Corinth?

The first problem was the fact that the steak being served by your host would first have been offered to a pagan god. It was that way with just about all the meat available. During these pagan sacrifices the meat of the animal was divided up. Part of it was burned as an offering to the god. Part of it was given to the priests for their meals. Then rest was given to the magistrates and other public officials as part of their livelihood. And what they didn't need they sold to the shops and markets in town, who would in turn put it on the meat counter for sale. And that was the best meat available for purchase in the marketplace.

And this was controversial for some Christians because they would be eating meat that had been made unclean by this act of pagan worship.

But there was another dilemma for Christians. If you refused participate in parties like this, then you cut yourself off from the majority of social occasions in your town, which that you cut yourself off from any opportunity to make connections with people in the community where the gospel could be shared with those who need to hear it.

You can identify with that. Maybe you've been invited to an office party or a wedding reception where you know that alcoholic beverages will be served. What do you do? You don't believe it is right for Christians to drink, but you want to make friends with people for the sake of Christ.

Or you are invited by some friends to go to dinner and a movie. They've chosen to go to an R-rated movie, and you've always felt that you shouldn't do that. What do you do? Do you offend your friend that you're trying to build a relationship with?

The Corinthians have asked "Is it OK to eat food that's been sacrificed to idols, or should we avoid it? Should we become vegetarians perhaps? Should we remove ourselves from the social contexts of the city?"

Now the situation gets more complicated. For there were some in the church in Corinth who considered themselves to be more mature than others. And they believed that Christ had set them free from legalism, and that there was really nothing to this idol worship business, so they felt free to go. They were free in Christ to enjoy anything that wasn't specifically spelled out as sin in the Bible.

But then there were others in the church, mostly new Christians, who felt differently. They had just been saved out of this evil atmosphere of idolatry and they didn't want anything to do with it anymore. They saw first hand how evil it was, and felt that as a Christian they couldn't participate any longer.

Some scholars have observed that when a sacrifice of food was made to the various gods that deity was believed to be present in the sacrifice. In fact, the spirit of that deity (or the demon of that god) was believed to enter the meal. Then when a person at the food, they took the spirit of the deity into themselves.

So if you're one of the more mature Christians in the church, you had to deal with this issue of whether or not to do something that would offend a brother or sister in Christ.

So there you have the cultural situation that the Corinthians had written to ask Paul about.

2. THE UNIVERSAL <u>PRINCIPLE</u>

Note: There may be issues that are unique to our culture that are not an issue in another culture. In Corinth the problem with pagan temples and idolatrous feasts was prevalent. However, the church in Jerusalem didn't have that problem, at least at the time the Scriptures were written.

And we don't have this exact issue in our culture today, but there are other areas where Christians are divided over what is right and wrong for a Christian to do. There are areas that are not specifically addressed in the Bible, so what do we do? Well, God gives us universal principles that help us make decisions.

And one of those principles in found here in v.1.

1 Corinthians 8:1b (NIV) - We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Now, when Paul writes "We know that we all possess knowledge…" he may have been quoting a phrase that the Corinthians used in their letter to Paul asking about these issues.

That word "knowledge" (*gnosis*) was probably one of the buzzwords of the Corinthians like rhetoric (*logos*) and wisdom (*sophia*). These terms appear as the leading gifts mentioned in Ch.12. To the Corinthians, being spiritual meant having knowledge. Paul disagrees.

ONSCREEN - Knowledge alone puffs up. Literally, it makes us arrogant.

Note: Don't misunderstand here. Knowledge is important in the Christian faith. There are certain things we need to know and understand. Doctrinal and theological matters are important for us to study and know.

But that knowledge alone can lead to arrogance and pride, thinking that we are better than other people who do not possess this knowledge.

ONSCREEN – Knowledge packaged with love builds up.

> Now when this knowledge is packaged in a life of love, then we are really mature, and we can build others up with that knowledge. Some Christians don't grow up, they just sort of swell up.
>
> **ILLUSTRATION –** It's the difference between a blowing up a balloon and building up a building.

Here's the principle that needs to drive all of my decisions. I don't just make it based purely upon knowledge. That knowledge needs to be packaged in love for other people. Then I will really make the right choice.

3. THE REAL <u>DIFFERENCE</u>

1 Corinthians 8:2 - The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.

If we think we know it all, we really don't know anything.

As you can see, Paul addressed himself primarily to the strong Christians in the church, believers who had spiritual knowledge and experience and who understood their authority and freedom in Christ. It is the strong who must care for the weak (Rom. 14–15).

1 Corinthians 8:3 - But the man who loves God is known by God.

Yet, there is a knowledge that is important: the knowledge God has of those who love Him (if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him).

CONCLUSION

So I go back to where we started in I Corinthians 10:31.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) - So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

High Definition Living … living to maximize the glory of God in all we do.

How is that glory most beautifully manifested? When I'm living my life to build others up.

Tragically, so many believers do not understand why God created them … why God saved them. Many are clueless when it comes to the purpose for which they should live their lives.

ILLUSTRATION – Last week was a sad week for our nation as a young man by the name of Cho Seung Hui went on a shooting rampage at Virginia Tech University.

> Among the many stories that have circulated, I was particularly moved by the report of one of Cho's classmates. It was the beginning of the semester and each class member was asked to sign in on a roll sheet. Then the prof went down each row to have each student introduce themselves. When it came to Cho, he sat there not saying a word. The teacher looked down to the roll sheet and saw on the line where Cho was to have signed in, he simply put a question mark. The teacher asked, "Is your name 'question mark'?" Cho didn't give answer; he just sat there.

How many believers today simply have a question mark over their lives when it comes to why and how they should live?