



A MATTER OF FAITH

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My kids just got out of school for the summer. Freedom! They are very glad to see summer. They are looking forward to not having to be in school all day and being free.

When Jesus went back to his hometown, there was a buzz throughout the area and people flocked to see him. He stood in front of the synagogue and read the following words for the prophet Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's

favor." He closed up what he was reading and sat down. The eyes of every-

one in the synagogue were watching him, and he then said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." He proclaimed who He was and the purpose of why He was there.

One of the reasons was to bring about freedom. Freedom is a beautiful thing because it allows us to be the unique individual that God created us to be.

We are diverse. Each one

of us different from everyone else. With diversity comes preferences. I hate bananas. I don't like the taste, smell or even the sight of them. I think they are disgusting. I think they are gooey, nasty things that should be left in the jungle. I am absolutely and morally free to hate bananas. No

one has ever confronted me and tried to correct me of this "sin in my life". They have expressed an opposing view. Some have said that they like bananas but they have not tried to convert me to their way of thinking.

Because I have such ill will towards bananas, would it be wrong for me to proselytize my preference? Should I teach that bananas are evil and consuming

them is a sin? I would sure hope that those receiving that message would dismiss me as a nutjob and not take my antibananaism to heart.

While I am free to hate bananas, I am not free to force that view on others. There is no moral authority to my belief. It is my personal preference.

There is much in Christianity that has been taught as from God when it is really just a matter of personal preference. Some of these teachings have morphed into traditions and are accepted as essential when they are not. Take for example Sunday church. This is a tradition built on a preference. The Sabbath is Saturday. In Acts, people met every day of the week. Someone standing in front of a group of people teaching was adapted from the Greeks. Nowhere in the scriptures will you find that this is the role of a pastor. It is a preference that rolled

into a tradition that has become the norm.

Meeting in a building is another preference. The churches in the New Testament met in homes. There is nothing morally wrong with these things. There is something terribly wrong with teaching that these are essential to our faith when they are not.

When I was a kid, the church that my parents took me to had a strong stance against going to movies. It

was something that was taught as wrong. Most people in the church, including the pastor, had VCRs. It was okay to rent movies. It was wrong to see them in the theater. This was absurd and hypocritical. It was also built on someone's personal preference.

Jesus brought about freedom. We are free to be who He created us to be with all our likes and dislikes. We are not free to force our preferences on others.

Freedom!



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