

“Why We Do What We Do”

1 Corinthians 9

God is not just concerned about what we do. He is VERY interested in why we do what we do.

This is what 1 Corinthians 9 helps us consider.

We find Paul still addressing “gray areas.” He’s still teaching the Corinthians about those situations in life that require wisdom, situations when the same action might be right or wise in one circumstance and wrong or foolish in another.

His basic point is that while we have certain freedoms as followers of Jesus, there are times we willingly set aside our rights for the sake of others.

To bring this home, Paul presents himself as a test case of this willingness. He serves as an example of one who set aside his freedom in order to benefit others.

His example teaches us that if we purify our motives, we will watch everyone win. That’s my encouragement for us today, Redemption HIII!

The Point: Purify your motives and watch everyone win!

Who wins? You win. They win. God wins!

1 Corinthians 9:1-18 (text displayed)

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (text displayed)

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (text displayed)

1. You win by revealing integrity. (9:1-18)

Paul lays out the basis of his rights in verses 1-2. In a series of rhetorical questions, he asks:

- Am I not free? Yes, you are, Paul, a Roman citizen.
- Am I not an apostle? Yes, you are, Paul, called by Jesus himself on the Damascus Road (Acts 9)
- Are you not my workmanship in the Lord? Yes, we are, Paul. You led us to the saving knowledge of Jesus.
 - Paul says they are the proof of his commission by Christ.
 - God’s work in them is the evidence that his ministry is legit! (Pastors, Directors, Group & Team Leaders)

Then Paul talks about his rights, driving to the key theme of the chapter, his right to receive an income in his missionary work.

- Barnabus and I: we have the *right* (we have the authority, the freedom) to eat and drink what we want (verse 4).
- We have *the right* to take a believing wife if we want (like the other apostles, the brothers of Jesus and Peter - the first pope was Married - just saying!) (verse 5).
- Then in verse 6, with sarcasm he asks: “Are Barnabus and I the only ones who have *no right* to not work for a living.” Acts 18 tells us when Paul arrived in Corinth he met Aquila & Priscilla. He stayed with them and worked with them because they were all tentmakers. He willingly chose to make tents rather than

be supported by the believers there in Corinth for his work in the gospel.

He then gives four reasons why it is permissible, if not preferable for servants of God to earn their living by their work for God.

- Human experience (v7): Soldiers don't buy their own uniforms. Farmers enjoy their own produce.
- God's Law (v8-10): Quoting Moses words in Deuteronomy 25:4, Paul highlights how oxen were allowed to eat the grain that fell while they treaded it out. Not to mention that they law mandated those who served the temple are provided for by the temple (v13).
- Intrinsic Justice: Other people were getting paid for their gospel work (v11-12).
- The Teaching of Jesus (v14): In Luke 10:7, when Jesus sent out his apostles, he said, "the worker deserves his wages."

When we zoom out, we see Paul instructing the church in Ephesus to pay those who serve the church (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

If you are one of our faithful givers at Redemption Hill who not only free up Staff to serve our church, but also pay the rent, run ministries, and support missionaries all over the world, thank you! If you are brand new, we don't expect you to give a dime. If you call RHC home and have yet to give, you can start today (App or Give page on our website). We're all in this together!

After providing the reasons he could be compensated, he then says: "I have made no use of any of these rights..."

- Look at verse 12: "Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ."
 - Here's the first reason: I would rather suffer than be a stumbling block to someone understanding who Jesus is.
 - Why would receiving money be a potential stumbling block? Because of the culture at Corinth. It was a city who loved their orators. People didn't go to concerts, they went to hear their favorite public speakers, who were often compensated very generously.
 - In fact in 2 Corinthians 2:17, he says there are so many who are just trying to make a profit off God's Word.
 - Paul says, I don't want anyone to think I'm doing what I'm doing for a paycheck. No.
- I'm doing what I'm doing, not because of any external motivation but because of an internal compulsion. This what he says in vv 15-18.
 - I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. (That's verse 15)
 - Now verse 16: "I'm not talking about boasting in fulfilling my assignment to preach. Necessity is laid upon me (some translations say: "I am compelled to do it."). Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! May I be cursed and cut off from God's people!
 - This is my reward: to offer the free gospel free of charge.

T: Why did Paul do what he did? Because of his love for God and people. That's why we do what we do. That's integrity in ministry.

2. They win by receiving salvation. (9:19-23)

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (text displayed)

Verse 19 reveals the posture of Paul's ministry.

- Like Jesus, he made himself a servant to all (Mk 10:45). Our message is not: come to *me*, be like *me*, serve *me*, but I'm coming to you. I will learn what you're about. Let me serve you.
- Jesus went to people. I love Luke 7:34, "**The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'** (Luke 7:34)
 - If WE are too busy to spend time with people far from God, WE ARE too busy.
 - It's great spending time with people who love Jesus (check out a Group!), *but* if you never spend quality time building *FRIENDSHIPS* with people who don't follow Jesus, remind yourself that you will spend eternity with the people who do! :)

We do so "that [we] might win more of them." The NIV says, "as many as possible." That's our goal.

- Paul says this 6 times in these 5 verses! To "win" someone is synonymous with "save" someone. We bring them from darkness to light, from rejecting God to living for God, from spiritual death to spiritual life.
- 755,000 people live within 5 mile radius of Medford Square. How many do we want to experience God's love through Jesus? 755K! Their eternal destiny is at stake! Heaven (life with God) and Hell (separation from God) are forever. That's why we take the posture of servants to "win as many as possible."

Paul describes what it means to be a servant in v.22: "I have become all things to all people." Paul was flexible enough to befriend anyone, but convictional enough to not compromise the message. *One unchanging message, possibly packaged 10,000 ways!*

Paul was adaptable!

He mentions four groups...

1. Jews: Wait Paul, aren't you a Jew? Ethnically, yes. BUT... following Jesus so completely rearranged his identity and mission in life that he NOW related to his own people in a different way. It was now an accommodation.
2. Under the law: Likely refers to Gentiles who were not ethnic Jews, but chose to live under the laws of Judaism. There are a lot of religious people in Boston who pray, who say they believe in God, yet are not wholeheartedly living for God.
3. Outside of the law: Gentiles apart from any Jewish influence. In our day, we can think about people with little to no religious or church background. They don't know the stories of Scripture."
4. The weak: Most likely refers to Christians with weak consciences. In fact, this is the point Paul has been driving toward. As Richard Hays points out, two clues show us this: 1) There is no counterbalancing statement ("I became as one who is strong to the strong.") and 2) he does not say "I became as the weak," (like he did for the first 3 groups), BUT - I BECAME WEAK. Paul actually took on the lifestyle and condition of the weak. Sociologists call this "downward mobility." He set aside his privileges to take on the lifestyle of the marginalized.
 - The "win" here is seeing someone progress toward greater maturity in Christ.
 - Are they saved? Yes & no. They are saved, but they are also being saved. (1 Corinthians 1:18 - "to those of us who are being saved, the cross is the power and wisdom of God.") Saved from the penalty, power and presence of sin.

Be adaptable, but not infinitely adaptable. He doesn't say, "To the wicked, I became wicked. To the thief, I became a thief." He still followed God's truth and lived under the law of Christ.

Do you live an adaptable life as you befriend people around you? We all love adapters. "Amen?" We lose them, break them, trip over them. They're great!

This adapter charges my phone. This adapter charges my headphones. This adapter is a piece of junk! What does an adapter? It connects one item to another item. When I want to listen to music or a podcast, I need this.

When I want to finish my work, I need this.

This is how it works as we seek to connect people to Jesus.

- Is someone depressed? Jesus was a “man of sorrows.”
- Has someone been burned by the church? Jesus often reserved his harshest words for religious leaders.
- Are your friends searching for satisfaction but never truly satisfied, introduce them to Ecclesiastes.
- Let me put like this:
 - If I'm talking to a baseball fan, I'm talking Big Papi.
 - If I'm talking to a college student, it's Champagne Papi.
 - If I'm talking to a kid, Papa Smurf!
- Jesus did this too. In John 3, he spoke with a religious leader named Nicodemus and quoted the Bible. In John 4, he spoke to a thirsty woman and told her about living water.

We clear obstacles, and point people to Jesus!

21 Ways to Point a Friend to Jesus

1. Invite someone to RHC
2. Serve someone & share why
3. Share an inspiring Bible verse
4. Share a sermon
5. Share a worship service link
6. Share a podcast
7. Pray with someone
8. Study the Bible with someone
9. Share your salvation story (testimony)
10. Share a story of how God is changing you
11. Share your daily God encounters
12. Share the gospel
13. Give someone a Bible
14. Give someone copy of a gospel
15. Give or loan someone a book
16. Discuss a cultural event from a Christian worldview
17. Share an article or story (to start a convo)
18. Share a song
19. Send a YouTube video
20. Share an intentional social media post
21. Be honest (about your life)

Three other insights as we point people to Jesus:

1. Paul does what he does to “save some.” He knew many would persist in their unbelief. We move out with realistic expectations *and* emboldened faith.
2. Paul emphasizes his role and responsibility: “I might win.” “I might save.” Paul knows God is the one who saves. As he said in 1 Cor. 3, “God gives the growth.”
3. When they win, you win (again)! Look at verse 23.
 - “I do it all for the sake of the gospel” This was Paul’s greatest passion, seeing the gospel (good news of Jesus) spread to all people.
 - Why? For double joy! For victory times 2! We would expect him to say, “that they may share with me in its blessings,” but Paul emphasize the joy he feels when another person experiences the joy of knowing Christ.

T: Interestingly, Paul models how he becomes all things to all people in verses 24-27. He speaks their language by uses a very familiar example. Like the Olympics in Athens, the Corinthians had the Isthmian games, a “great athletic festival held at Corinth every two years.” (Hays) They would immediately understand runners and boxers and victory wreaths.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (text displayed)

We win by revealing integrity. They win by receiving salvation.

3. God wins, because he is the prize! (9:24-27)

God is the reason we are running the race. He is the prize at the finish line. Heaven is heaven because God is there. We keep following Jesus day after day, because we want to spend eternity with the one our souls are made for.

How we run reveals what we believe about the value of our reward.

When athletes are training to be the best in the world, they are willing to pay any price. Serena Williams, Roger Federer, Tom Brady, Jayson Tatum, they pour every ounce of energy into intense workout sessions for hours each day, maintain incredibly strict diets, surrounded by coaches and trainers who push them to the limit, so they can be at the top of their profession.

I have to give a shoutout to my friend Jason Hodges, a friend of RHC and kingdom leader in New England. Tomorrow, Jason will begin his “One More Challenge.” He will attempt to complete 6 full distance Ironman triathlons in the 6 New England states over 6 consecutive days. All of this to encourage leaders to never give up: to take one more opportunity, one more day, with one more moment to give God our best.

Let’s pray for him!

Paul says, they do that for “a pathetic crown of withered vegetables, how much more should we maintain self-discipline for the sake of an imperishable crown?”

I said it a few weeks ago. I’ll say it again: it’s time to run. It’s time to give God our best. It’s time to practice uncomfortable discipline! Look at verses 25-27.

FINISH

It’s time to move toward people and befriend them like Jesus. It’s time to do whatever it takes that we might win some.

As we do, we show that God is better, that he is more valuable than anything life can give or death can take away. We show the world God is the ultimate prize.

He is the reason we run like we run!

Are you ready to run? Is it time to pick up your pace? Jesus is running. Let’s run with him.

We’re running with passion. We’re running with purpose. God, we’re running for you!