



Bible Study – February 28, 2024

A Study About Sharing Your Faith

Lesson 9: Doing All Things for The Gospel | 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NIV)

Introduction

How much would you be willing to do what is right and what it takes to win somebody when witnessing to them? As you think about this, consider what the Apostle Paul professed to do when witnessing to other people. He used his liberality in the faith to humble himself like a servant to gain the confidence of the unbelieving soul. Did not Jesus Christ, our Lord, teach the early disciples the importance of being a servant rather than a ruler over others (*Mark 10:42-45*)? In this lesson, Paul demonstrates his commitment to saving souls for the gospel's sake. To him, nothing was as important as sharing the gospel to win others into the kingdom of GOD. Let us see what we can learn from him today.

Freedom As A Servant of The Gospel

1 Corinthians 9:19

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible.

Paul knew he could live as a Christian and express his belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of GOD. But he wanted the believers in the church of Corinth to know that he was voluntarily a servant to everyone to win as many unbelievers as possible for the Name of Jesus Christ. He wanted them to see that he labored in the gospel for the unbelievers. The fact that he was a servant suggested that he did this without pay or reward. As a servant, he complied with the prejudices against him, the customs in the many different places, the habits of those he was around, and the opinions of those who opposed him. Yet, he maintained his Christian stance with a right conscience and did not yield to their desires or opinions about him.

Please understand Paul's voluntary servant approach to drawing people to Christ. When the Lord said, *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" [John 12:32 NIV] Did Paul discover that there would have to be more of Jesus and less of himself for this to happen? Yes, indeed so. He did this to gain people to Christ so he might be His vessel for saving many souls. This demonstrated Paul's noble character of self-denial and genuine commitment to the soul-saving cause. Therefore, we must have a "More of Jesus and Less of Me" approach when witnessing to others. People want to know that we genuinely care about their salvation and not just how much we care about ourselves.



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Q. How difficult is it to practice self-denial voluntarily? What does this require that you do so you can live it? _____

Respect Traditions of Others When Witnessing

1 Corinthians 9:20

To the Jews, I became like a Jew to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law, though (I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.

Here, Paul had a unique advantage to witness. Although he was the apostle to the Gentiles, he was Jewish and knew the Jewish customs. He had a deep concern for the salvation of the Jewish people. These were his own people, and he strongly identified with them. Consider his words in the following: *For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.* [Romans 9:3-4 NIV]

He practiced visiting the synagogues in every city along his journeys. Why? Because he wanted to win some into the Christian faith. When he was converted, he put behind him his Jewish traditions and lived in his new life in Christ. He acknowledged that the people who lived in Israel were traditionally keeping the law of Moses, though he no longer did this himself. Yet, he knew the law. Everything that he did was with a good conscience and a heart's desire to win the souls of Jews into the kingdom of GOD. Just as he converted to the Christian faith, it was a high priority to him to access their minds and be the means of leading them to Jesus Christ. Even today, GOD burdens His believers with people near and dear to them. It may be close relatives, friends, neighbors, or somebody from our past to witness the gospel to them.

Q. Tell of a time when it was first and foremost that you witnessed the gospel to a family member or friend to win them into the Christian faith. _____



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Respect People of Different Nationalities

1 Corinthians 9:21

To those not having the law, I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so as to win those not having the law.

When you are witnessing out in public, you will meet people who do not act, look, and think like you. Our nation has always been a diverse people of many different cultures, customs, and nationalities. But remember these words from Paul in the following: *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. [2 Corinthians 5:15 NIV]* Christ died for all people regardless of race, color, tribe, or nationality. He came to rescue the noblest of all creatures made—humankind. Paul recognized this in his ministry to the Gentiles. These are the people that he states are not under the law. This means they worshipped idols and ate foods sacrificed to them, ate the meat of strangled animals, practiced blood rituals, and performed acts of sexual immorality in naming a few forbidden things.

How did Paul handle such behavior? First, he was not judgmental of them or their customs and ways of life. Paul knew that condemnation of such prejudices would be harmful and opposed to trying to win them to Christ. Secondly, he avoided hindrances to his being able to fulfill the law of love. Love your neighbor was a consistent message he preached (*See Romans 13:8-10*). So, being under Christ's law is the law of love. Living according to this law is to obey Christ's commands, keep His instructions, yield to His will, and maintain the rules of the moral law. This respect for people who differ from us remains the same for the church today. Why? Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (*Hebrews 13:8*).

Q. What prejudices do you need to confront in your life so that you will be an effective witness for Christ? _____

Respect People Who Have Thin Convictions

1 Corinthians 9:22

To the weak, I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means, I might save some.



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Earlier in these notes, I stated that Paul was not judgmental or condemning when preaching the gospel. When he made this point about the weak, he referenced those whose moral opinions were not strict. These tended to interpret things loosely. They usually challenge what is declared in the law. These are the ones today who want abortion rights, who agree with same-sex marriage rights, and who embrace decisions, whether lawful or unlawful. Again, if you witness to people with different convictions, you must have a genuine open mind for them. Paul realized they were weak in their beliefs and would be offended by lawful things. He carefully dealt with their feelings and prejudices.

Paul recognized this in eating meals with people who had different convictions about the food they would eat. Look at his words in the following verse: *Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall. [1 Corinthians 8:13 NIV]* This was his way of doing good to others. What he did with people should teach us not to lacerate or wound the feelings of others, not to offend them to the point where it does no good, and not to stir up prejudices unnecessarily. Paul's gesture towards them was to accommodate himself in everything if it would win them to Jesus Christ. Saving souls was essential to him, and he did what he could to win some.

Q. Describe a situation and time when a relative, friend, or acquaintance disagreed with the gospel, stating that they think it is not very friendly towards them._____

Doing All for the Gospel

1 Corinthians 9:23

I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

Paul's actions were voluntary to gain the broadest possible audience to hear the gospel. He wanted to share his blessing as GOD'S fellow worker who reaped the harvest of many being won to Christ.

Endnotes

1. Drs. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1983) 524 and 525.
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