

Small Group Guide: *Living to Win* - 1 Corinthians 9:1-27
***The Gospel Centered Life* - Part 7, 07/26/26**

Key Takeaways:

- A Gospel Centered life is focused on the mission of the church, not personal comfort or preference.
- Freedom is not the goal — winning people to Jesus is the goal.
- Living a Gospel Centered life requires intentional discipline.
- The church exists for the sake of non-believers, not for the comfort of believers.

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever given up something you had every right to keep for the sake of someone else? What was that like?

Discussion Questions:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-14. Paul makes a strong case that church leaders have the right to be financially supported, but in verses 15-18 he says he chose not to use that right. What does that tell us about how Paul viewed the gospel compared to his personal rights and comfort?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19 and Philippians 2:5-8. Paul says that though he is free and belongs to no one, he made himself a slave to everyone. How does that kind of voluntary surrender reflect the character of Jesus?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 and Galatians 5:13-14. Paul gives four examples of how he adapted to reach different people. He was careful to say he adapted culturally, not morally. What is the difference between those two things in practice? a) Where do you think the line is between adapting to reach others and compromising the integrity of the gospel? b) Where do you think that line gets blurry for Christians today?
4. Dave said that much of what happens in Western church culture is driven by personal preference and tradition rather than by what best serves the mission. Do you agree/disagree? a) What are some examples from your own experience where church culture may have become an unnecessary obstacle to people hearing the gospel?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and Hebrews 12:1-2. Paul compares being a disciple of Jesus to an athlete in serious training. He says he disciplines his body and makes it his slave so that he will not be disqualified for the prize. What do you think Paul means by being disqualified? (Note: the sermon makes clear this is not about losing salvation, but about losing the eternal reward of a life lived on mission.) a) Are you drifting or running? What one specific habit or discipline could you begin this week to pursue Christ more intentionally?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 and Matthew 6:19-21. Paul describes how our lives will one day be evaluated—with some things surviving like gold, silver, and costly stones, and other things burning up like wood, hay, and straw. What kinds of things do you think fall into each category in a practical, everyday sense? a) If the spiritual quality of your life was tested and refined today, what do you think/hope would survive? What are you building today that will still matter in eternity?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 9:16-19. Paul says that if he had been paid for preaching, it would have become transactional—he would simply be doing what he was hired to do. The difference between a paid actor performing a role and an eyewitness giving testimony is a paid actor delivers lines because that's the job, but a witness speaks because they saw something real and cannot stay quiet about it. We're called to be witnesses, not actors. When you talk about Jesus, are you more like an actor performing a religious role you feel obligated to play, or are you a genuine witness who can't help but speak about something you've actually experienced?
8. Read 1 Corinthians 9:23. Paul says he does everything for the sake of the gospel so that he may share in its blessings. What do you think it means to share in the blessings of the gospel? a) How does living on mission connect to our own spiritual joy and growth?
9. Read Romans 1:16, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8 and Romans 10:9-10. Spend time reflecting on the gospel itself—not just as a message you share with others, but as the foundation of your own daily life. Ask yourself: does the way I actually live reflect the value I say I place on the gospel? a) What are you placing ahead of the gospel?
10. Chapter 9 draws a distinction between a self-centered life, a church-centered life, a tradition-centered life, and a gospel-centered life. Which of these most honestly describes how you are currently living, and what would need to change to move toward a gospel-centered life?

Prayer:

- Gratitude for the gospel and for the people who removed obstacles so that we could hear it
- Honesty about the ways personal preference or comfort has become more important than mission
- Courage and creativity to become all things to all people for the sake of the gospel
- Specific people in your lives who do not yet know Jesus—name them if you are comfortable doing so
- A renewed commitment to pursue Christ with the discipline and intentionality of an athlete running to win