

# 1 Corinthians

What's your win?

## Series Overview

Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth is a case-study in what makes an unhealthy church. In this series, we'll explore what made that church so unhealthy as a guide to becoming the healthy church God has called us to be.

## Sermon Introduction

"To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete" (Nike). "To accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy" (Tesla). "To organize the world's information" (Google). The best companies in the world are crystal clear about what their "win" is, and everything they have—resources, decisions, strategies—all are directed accordingly. For the Apostle Paul, his clear win was to reach people for Jesus. So... what's your win?

## Passage: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NIV)

1Cor. 9:19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

1Cor. 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.

1Cor. 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.

1Cor. 9:22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

1Cor. 9:23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

## Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

1. Read the passage. What stood out to you? Was there anything that you found surprising or confusing?
2. Paul claims to be free, but he uses his freedom in a very surprising way (v. 19). How do you think most people typically understand freedom? How does that differ from Paul's view of freedom?
3. You can imagine Paul's critics accusing him of hypocrisy. By his own admission, he's one way with one group and another with another group. How would you summarize Paul's

rationale?

4. How would you explain Paul's statement in v. 21 that he acts as "one not having the law"? What do you think "Christ's law" requires? Cf. Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:10; Gal. 6:2.
5. Clearly, Paul's concern is more with whether he can win people to Jesus than either his rights or what other people (including other believers, like those in the Corinthian church) think of him. Are there ways in which either our—often very American—concern with our rights or with other Christians' opinions of us could prevent us from being the witness we should be to other people?
6. Paul's single-minded obsession was to reach people for Jesus. To what extent do you think all believers are supposed to share Paul's mission of winning people to Jesus?
7. In v. 22, Paul says he has "become all things to all [people]." *All* is a very inclusive designation. Who are the people you would struggle to find common ground with? Who do you think God is calling to reach them?

## **Prayer**

*Often a position of submission helps us physically connect with the spiritual reality of meeting God. A posture of kneeling with open hands can demonstrate our willingness to submit to God's power.*

- Praise God for his single-minded obsession with rescuing us from sin and death so that we could have life with him through Jesus.
- Consider whether your "win" aligns with the purpose God has in mind for you.
- Confess any times when you've prioritized your rights or being liked over concern for people who need to know Jesus.
- Ask God to give you his heart for people and to help you uniquely begin to align the whole of your life—in your job, your community, your family, your finances—to reach people for Jesus.