

1. READ

Pastor Watley's Selected Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9 : 24 – 27 (NIV)

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Further Reading: 1 Corinthians 9 : 1 – 18 New International Version (NIV)

¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? ²Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴Don't we have the right to food and drink? ⁵Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹²If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

¹³Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.



UNLEASHED

STUDY GUIDE

¹⁵ But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. ¹⁶ For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

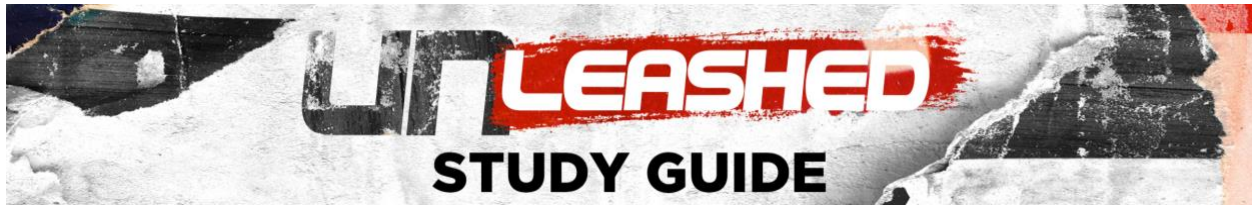
2. REFLECT

[Make sure to review this week's sermon!]



This week our Senior Pastor Rev. Matthew L. Watley continued his sermon series entitled “Unleashed.” During this series, we have been exploring what it means to live an “unleashed life.” Each lesson has revealed that we are destined for an uninhibited relationship with God and a life of spiritual freedom. In addition to being freed from the *Sting*, *Stain*, and *Strain* of sin, God is also unleashing us in this season to accomplish so much more!

In our lesson for week three, Pastor Watley urges us to redefine what it means to be *unleashed*. For many of us, that word could mean a variety of things including being carefree or unrestrained. However, this week Pastor encourages us to be more intentional about defining what being unleashed truly looks like. In fact, we learn that there are two distinct ways that we can live an unleashed life. We can either be **aimlessly unleashed** or **purposefully unleashed**. When we are aimlessly unleashed, we can often find ourselves pursuing people, places, or things



without direction or guidance. This trivial pursuit can quickly deplete our time, energy, and resources on things that were not sent by God. On the other hand, when we are purposefully unleashed, we can surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit and find abundance and freedom when we allow God to order our steps. These differences are important to recognize, and they lead us to the crucial question Pastor asks:

**If there are two ways of living an *unleashed* life – aimlessly or purposefully;
Which way are you living right now?**

When we take an honest inventory of our lives, many of us can admit that we do not always live a purposefully unleashed life. It is easy to get sidetracked or lose focus, especially during difficult seasons. However in our selected passage for this week (1 Corinthians 9), the Apostle Paul demonstrates what it looks like to be purposefully unleashed. As Paul writes his letter to the Christian church in Corinth, he includes a variety of instructions and reflections about how this population should conduct themselves. However, his focus in chapter 9 is specifically on freedom. Right at verse 1 he starts with the rhetorical question, “Am I not free?” This question, and the many questions following it, were posed because Paul knew that all of the work he had done entitled him to riches and rewards. And yet, instead of aimlessly pursuing the riches of this world, Paul chose to pursue his God-given purpose, even if it meant he would be penniless.

In addition, in the middle of his chapter on freedom, Paul also describes the benefits of being constrained and disciplined. Although it may seem odd, Paul’s paradox is actually teaching us that we are called to freedom that may be considered “strange” or countercultural. In verses 24-27, Paul compares the Christian journey to a competitive race where we must not “run like someone running aimlessly,” but we must “go into strict training” and practice restraint. Believe it or not, these limitations are included in Paul’s idea of freedom. Likewise, it is important for us to realize that being a believer means our freedom will not look like everyone else’s. **However, perhaps the parameters of our freedom are actually protecting our purpose!**

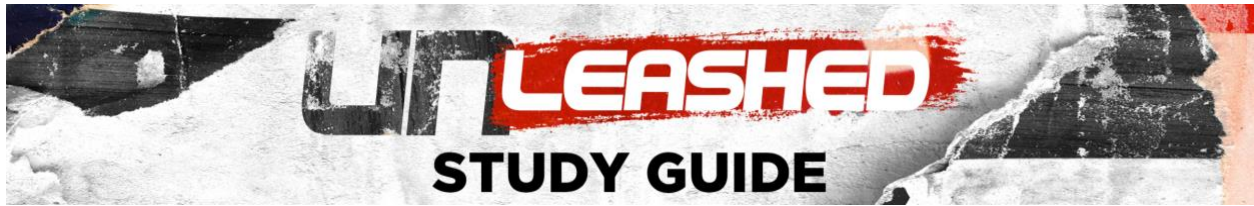
Instead of carelessly and aimlessly investing in all of the wrong places, perhaps God’s parameters allow us to freely invest in our purpose while being guided and protected from the traps of the enemy. As Pastor Watley notes, “being unleashed and living in freedom is not about a lack of responsibility, it is about being accountable to the anointing that is on our lives.” Each of us has been entrusted with gifts and talents that the Lord wants to use to build His kingdom. It is up to us to *purposefully unleash* them wisely.

3. RESPOND

Introspective Questions

- Are you living aimlessly or purposefully unleashed?





- What does your freedom in God look like?

Discussion Questions

- In 1 Corinthians 9:1-18, Paul speaks about all of the things he can potentially receive but he doesn't take them. Why do you think this is?
- What does Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 tell us about the Christian walk? Does it sound appealing?