LESSON TEN

Built Different

"A Disciple Pursues One More"

SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 9:1-27

MEMORY VERSE

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Built different: disciples surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM

Share Your Story

GROUP TIME

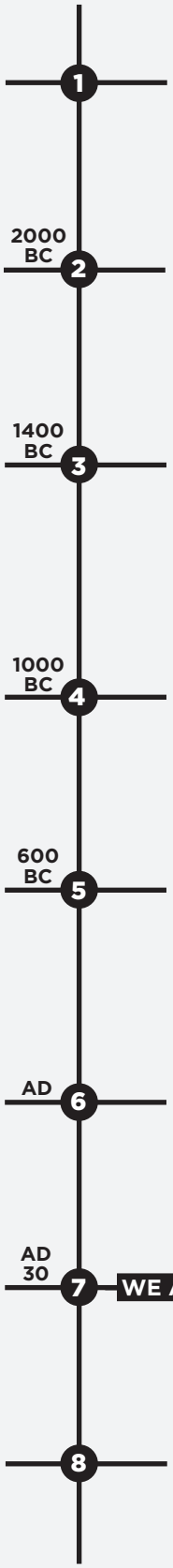
5 minutes	**Welcome**
5–10 minutes	**Attention Grabber**
10 minutes	**Story / Context**
25 minutes	**Discussion**
5–10 minutes	**Closing & Prayer**

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Next Steps Class –** pray for NSC next weekend. Pray for people to connect with Lakepointe in an intentional way, committing to the church family to be discipled and finding a place to leverage their talents and skills.

<u>BEGIN</u> this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

GOD'S STORY TIMELINE



1. God Creates the World and Promises a Rescuer *(Genesis 1-11)*
God created everything good and placed humans in a garden to live in close relationship with Him. But Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves instead of God, and sin entered the world. Relationships, creation, even our connection to God was broken. Yet even in judgment, God promised that one day, a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent and bring healing.
+This points to Jesus as the promised Rescuer who defeats sin, Satan, and death.

2. God Calls a Family and Makes a Promise *(Genesis 12-50)*
God chose a man named Abram (later Abraham) and gave a covenant to him: that he would have a large family, receive a land, and be a blessing to all nations. Though Abraham and his descendants were deeply flawed, God continued His promise through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.
+This points to Jesus as the true offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are fully blessed.

3. God Rescues His People and Forms a Redeemed Nation *(Exodus-Deuteronomy)*
Generations later, Abraham's descendants were enslaved in Egypt. God raised up Moses to rescue them from oppression and slavery. God called His people into a relationship with Himself. He made a covenant with them, gave them the law, and instructed them in worship. He was forming a people who would live differently and show the world what it looked like to belong to Him.
+This points to Jesus as the greater Moses, who rescues us from slavery to sin and writes God's law on our hearts.

4. God Gives a Home and Promises a King *(Joshua-2 Chronicles)*
God brought His people into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. Over time, they asked for a king like the other nations. It was a disaster. But God graciously gave them David, with whom he made another covenant: one of David's descendants would rule forever. Solomon built the temple, but after his death, the kingdom split into two and began spiraling into idolatry and injustice again.
+This points to Jesus as the forever King from David's line, who reigns with justice and peace.

5. God Removes His People and Reminds Them of His Promise *(Ezra-Nehemiah)*
Because of their rebellion, God allowed His people to be conquered and taken into exile. First, it was the Northern Kingdom, Israel (to Assyria), then the Southern Kingdom, Judah (to Babylon). The temple was destroyed, and the glory of the kingdom faded. Yet God continued to speak through the prophets, reminding the people of His promise to restore them, give them new hearts, and send a Rescuer.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the new covenant, restores hearts, and fulfills every prophecy.

6. God Sends His Son and Fulfills His Promise *(Matthew-John)*
At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man. He perfectly obeyed the law, pointed us to the Father, and laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, proving that He is the Savior, the King, and the fulfillment of every covenant promise God has ever made.
+Jesus is the center of the story—all of Scripture leads to Him.

7. God Sends His Spirit and Builds His Church *(Acts-Jude)*
After rising from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The early Church spread the good news of Jesus across the Roman world—planting churches, welcoming both Jews and Gentiles, and learning to live as God's new covenant people. Though imperfect, the Church carries Jesus' mission forward today.
+This points to Jesus as the risen King who gives the Spirit to dwell in us and send us on mission.

8. God Restores All Things and Dwells with His People *(Revelation)*
The story isn't over. One day Jesus will return to judge evil and make all things new. There will be a new heaven and new earth, where God's people from every tribe and nation will live with Him forever. There will be no more pain, no more death, and no more sin—just joy, justice, and unbroken peace.
+This points to Jesus as the one who brings the story to its perfect and eternal culmination.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

LEADER TIP

To grab your participants' attention, start your lesson by telling a story related to the lesson's main idea. We have provided you with three options in this section, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: LEVERAGING FREEDOM

Harriet Tubman escaped slavery in 1849 and made her way to freedom. She could have stayed in the North and built a safer life for herself. Instead, she returned to the South again and again to guide others to freedom through the Underground Railroad. Every trip was dangerous. If she had been caught, she could have been beaten, enslaved again, or killed. But Tubman did not treat her freedom as something only for herself.

Her freedom became a mission. She willingly surrendered comfort, safety, and personal preference because there were still others who needed to be rescued.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What does her story demonstrate about leveraging freedom for the sake of others?*
- *What kinds of comfort or preference might people need to surrender for the good of someone else?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
Harriet Tubman's story reminds us that freedom can become a mission rather than a possession. In 1 Corinthians 9:1–27, Paul shows believers how to surrender rights and preferences so that others may come to know Jesus. A disciple is built different because they do not use freedom only for themselves. They surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus.

OPTION 2: PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Philip was preaching the gospel in Samaria, enjoying very successful ministry. Then suddenly an angel of the Lord has him go south to the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza. From a human perspective, that may have seemed like an unusual assignment. Philip leaves a place where many are hearing the gospel and is sent to a road where he'll simply meet one man sitting in a chariot.

He meets an Ethiopian official reading from the book of Isaiah. It provides a natural bridge to sharing the gospel, and that man turns to Christ and is baptized. Then Philip is immediately transported away back to his previous mission. The whole trip seems to have been for one person.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What does this story tell us about God's heart for One More?*
- *Why is it easy to overlook one person when we are focused on what seems bigger?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
Philip and the Ethiopian official remind us that one person matters deeply to God. In 1 Corinthians 9:1–27, Paul shows believers what it looks like to surrender rights, preferences, and comfort so that others may meet Jesus. A disciple is built different because they surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus.

OPTION 3: NO SOLDIER LEFT BEHIND

The U.S. Army's Soldier's Creed includes this line: "I will never leave a fallen comrade." That commitment means that a soldier is trained to think of others. They are part of a unit, and the life of the person beside them matters. And that commitment can become very costly. A fallen comrade may be wounded, trapped, or separated from the unit. Helping them may require delay, danger, exhaustion, or even your own life. But the creed shows that people are not disposable, and the mission isn't only about your personal survival.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Why does the does the commitment to a fellow soldier carry so much weight?*
- *What does it reveal about a group when they refuse to treat one person as expendable?*

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text:
The commitment to never leave a fallen comrade reminds us that one person is worth costly action. In 1 Corinthians 9:1–27, Paul shows believers what it looks like to surrender rights, preferences, and comfort so that others may meet Jesus. A disciple is built different because they surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus.

2 SET THE STAGE

LEADER TIP

This section provides the historical, cultural, and literary context needed to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

I. Greetings and Thanksgiving (1:1–9)
II. Problems in the church (1:10–6:20)
  A. Divisions and factions (1:10–4:21)
  B. Gross immorality (5:1–13)
  C. Litigation before pagan courts (6:1–11)
  D. Fornication with prostitutes (6:12–20)
III. Replies to questions from the Corinthians (7:1–14:40)
  A. Questions about marriage (7:1–40)
  B. Limitations of Christian liberty (8:1–11:1)
  C. Veiling of women in public worship (11:2–16)
  D. Disorderly behavior at the Lord's Supper (11:17–34)
  E. Exercise of spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40)
IV. The Resurrection of the Body (15:1–58)
  A. Centrality of Christ's resurrection (15:1–20)
  B. Sequence of resurrection events (15:21–28)
  C. The resurrection and suffering (15:29–34)
  D. Nature of the resurrection body (15:35–49)
  E. The believer's victory over death (15:50–58)
V. Conclusion (16:1–24)
  A. Collection for the believers at Jerusalem (16:1–4)
  B. Paul's plans for visiting Corinth (16:5–9)
  C. Exhortations, instructions, and salutations (16:10–24)[1]

CONTEXT

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul taught the Corinthians to use freedom in a way that builds up the community of faith. In 1 Corinthians 9, he now uses his own life as an example. Paul had real rights as an apostle. He had the right to be recognized, supported, and provided for by the churches he served. But Paul willingly surrendered those rights so nothing unnecessary would get in the way of the gospel. His goal was not to protect his preferences or prove his importance. His goal was to win as many as possible to Christ. Paul became "all things to all people" without changing the message of Jesus, and he disciplined his life like an athlete running to win the prize. A disciple is built different because they surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus.

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

People tend to protect themselves first. We cling to our rights, guard our comfort, and defend our preferences. We think that freedom is something we are granted for personal advantage.

[1] F. Alan Tomlinson, "1 Corinthians," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1811.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Jesus did not come to protect His own comfort or demand the honor He deserved. He came to seek and save the lost. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus gave Himself so sinners could be rescued and brought near to God. Because we have been reached by His grace, we are free to surrender rights, preferences, and comfort so that One More might meet Jesus.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM: SHARE YOUR STORY

Share Your Story is one of the ways disciples join the mission of Jesus in everyday life. It is not limited to a stage, a microphone, or a dramatic testimony. It often begins much closer to home: a conversation with a neighbor, a question from a coworker, a moment with a family member, or a friendship where someone is beginning to open up spiritually. Disciples learn to notice the people God has placed near them and speak honestly about the grace they have received.

In preparation for this lesson, review the guidelines for "Sharing Your Story" (click here for guidelines) and prepare to share your story in your group time.

Paul was willing to lay down his life so that others could hear. We are called to do the same, removing unnecessary barriers so others can hear the good news of Jesus. We step toward people instead of waiting for them to step toward us. A disciple is built different because they surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus.

3 LOOK AT THE BOOK

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your group through Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the leader, work through all the exercises below to ensure you understand the text well.

1 Corinthians 9:1–6 Paul begins with a series of rapid questions: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (v. 1). These questions show that Paul's rights and authority were being challenged in some way. In the ancient world, traveling speakers and leaders were often evaluated by status, credentials, public reputation, and financial support. Paul's refusal to accept support from the Corinthians may have made some people question whether he was really an apostle.

Paul answers by pointing to two marks of his apostleship. First, he had "seen Jesus our Lord" (v. 1), which connects his ministry to the risen Christ who called and commissioned him. Second, the Corinthians themselves were the fruit of his ministry. "Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?" (v. 1). If others questioned Paul, the Corinthian church should not have. Their existence as believers was the "seal" of his apostleship (v. 2). A seal marked something as authentic. The Corinthians were living evidence that Paul's ministry was genuine.

In verses 3–6, Paul names some of the rights he could claim. He had the right to food and drink (v. 4), the right to be accompanied by a believing wife like other apostles (v. 5), and the right to receive support rather than work another job to provide for himself (v. 6). Paul is not embarrassed to say these rights are real. The point of the chapter is not that disciples have no rights. The point is that disciples are willing to surrender real rights for the sake of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:7–12 Paul then gives several examples to show that ministry support is reasonable. Soldiers do not serve at their own expense. Vineyard workers eat grapes from the vineyard. Shepherds drink milk from the flock (v. 7). These are ordinary examples from work and life. Paul's point is simple: those who labor for the good of others are normally supported by that labor.

He then turns to Scripture. In verse 9, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." In its Old Testament setting, this law protected working animals from being denied food while they labored. Paul sees a broader principle in the command. If God's law shows concern that an ox should benefit from its work, then the same principle applies to those who labor spiritually among God's people. The plowman and thresher work in hope of sharing in the harvest (v. 10).

Paul applies the principle directly in verse 11: "If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?" The Corinthians had received the gospel through Paul's ministry. It would not have been wrong for Paul to receive financial support from them. In fact, others apparently did receive support from the Corinthians (v. 12). Paul's claim was legitimate.

But verse 12 gives the turn in the argument: "We did not use this right." Paul had the right to be supported, but he chose not to claim that right among the Corinthians. Why? "On the contrary, we put up with anything

rather than hinder the gospel of Christ" (v. 12). That sentence is central to the chapter. Paul does not surrender his rights because they are fake. He surrenders them because the gospel matters more.

1 Corinthians 9:13–18 In verses 13–14, Paul gives another argument for ministry support. Those who served in the temple received food from the temple, and those who served at the altar shared in what was offered there (v. 13). Then Paul says, "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (v. 14). Paul's right to support is not merely cultural or practical. It is consistent with Scripture and with the teaching of Jesus.

Yet Paul immediately says, "But I have not used any of these rights" (v. 15). He is not writing this chapter in order to start receiving support from Corinth. He would rather die than have anyone take away his "boast" (v. 15). Paul does not mean sinful bragging. He means that his joy and integrity in this situation come from offering the gospel free of charge so that no one can accuse him of preaching for personal gain.

Verses 16–18 explain Paul's inner compulsion. "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (v. 16). Paul does not view preaching as a career path he selected for personal fulfillment. He has been entrusted with a stewardship from God. His reward is that he can preach "free of charge" and refuse to "make full use" of his rights as a preacher of the gospel (v. 18). Paul's freedom is not mainly the freedom to claim what he deserves. It is the freedom to give himself away so others can hear Christ clearly.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 Verse 19 states Paul's missionary posture: "Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible." Paul is free in Christ, but he willingly takes the posture of a servant. His goal is repeated throughout this section: to "win" people. He uses the word in verses 19, 20, 21, and 22, and then says, "by all possible means I might save some" (v. 22). Paul is not casual about One More meeting Jesus. He arranges his life around that aim.

Paul then describes how he adapts to different people. To the Jews, he becomes like a Jew (v. 20). To those under the law, he becomes like one under the law, though he knows he is not under the law as a way of being justified before God (v. 20). To those not having the law, he becomes like one not having the law, though he is not free from God's law but is "under Christ's law" (v. 21). To the weak, he becomes weak (v. 22).

This passage is often misunderstood. Paul is not saying he changes the gospel, compromises holiness, or becomes dishonest depending on the crowd. Verse 21 places a boundary around his flexibility: he remains under the law of Christ. Paul adapts his posture, habits, customs, and approach, but he does not abandon obedience to Jesus. He removes unnecessary barriers without removing the offense of the cross.

Verse 23 gives the motive: "I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." Paul's flexibility is not people-pleasing. It is gospel-centered love. He surrenders rights and preferences because he wants people from different backgrounds to hear the good news without unnecessary obstacles.

1 Corinthians 9:24–27 Paul closes with an athletic image that would have been familiar in Corinth. Runners in a race do not run aimlessly. Athletes go into strict training to receive a crown that will not last (vv. 24–25). Paul contrasts that temporary prize with the eternal prize of faithfulness to Christ and participation in His mission.

In verse 26, Paul says he does not run "like someone running aimlessly" and does not fight "like a boxer beating the air." His life has direction. His choices are disciplined. His freedom is not random or self-indulgent. It is ordered around the gospel.

Verse 27 can sound severe: "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." Paul is not teaching that he can earn salvation by discipline. He is showing that the messenger cannot live carelessly while calling others to Christ. A life ruled by appetite, comfort, and self-protection would undermine the very gospel he preaches. Paul disciplines himself because the mission is worth the cost.

The whole chapter shows what freedom looks like when it is captured by the gospel. Paul has real rights, but he refuses to treat them as ultimate. He adapts without compromising, serves without demanding recognition, and disciplines his life so that more people might hear about Jesus. A disciple is built different because they surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-27

9 Am 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? 2 Even 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.

3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. 4 Don't we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don'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? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

7 Who 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? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." k Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely 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. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If 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.

13 Don'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? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that

those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. 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.

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 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. 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. 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. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

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. [2]

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: PAUL'S FREEDOM AND RIGHTS

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1–6. Make a list of the questions that Paul asks.

Suggested Response: Paul asks, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" He says the Corinthians are the result of his work in the Lord and the seal of his apostleship. He also asks whether he and Barnabas have the right to food and drink, the right to take along a believing wife, and the right not to work for a living.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: PAUL'S RIGHT TO SUPPORT

Read 1 Corinthians 9:7–18. Paul gives a series of examples to explain that gospel workers have a right to support from those they minister to. Did Paul accept support? Why or why not?

Suggested Response: Paul gives the examples of a soldier, a vineyard worker, and a shepherd. He quotes the law about not muzzling an ox while it is treading out the grain. He also mentions those who serve in the temple and at the altar. Paul says the Lord

[2] *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Co 9:1–27.

commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. But Paul also says he did not use this right. He put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ, and he preached the gospel free of charge.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: PAUL'S MISSION AND DISCIPLINE

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–27. What does Paul say he becomes for different people? What images does he use to describe a disciplined life?

Suggested Response: Paul says that though he is free, he has made himself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. To the Jews he became like a Jew, to those under the law like one under the law, to those not having the law like one not having the law, and to the weak he became weak. He says he became all things to all people so that by all possible means he might save some. Paul then uses the images of a runner and a boxer. He says runners run to get a prize, athletes go into strict training, and he does not run aimlessly or fight like a boxer beating the air.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: RIGHTS THAT SERVE THE GOSPEL

In 1 Corinthians 9:1–18, instead of taking what his rights allow, what does Paul demonstrate is more important?

Suggested Response: Paul clearly shows that his rights are real. He has the right to be recognized as an apostle, the right to receive support, and the right to be provided for by the churches he serves. But Paul refuses to treat those rights as ultimate. He willingly lays them down because he does not want anything unnecessary to hinder the gospel. Paul teaches that disciples do not have to use every right they possess. When the mission of Jesus is the greater goal, rights can be surrendered for the sake of One More.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: FLEXIBILITY WITHOUT COMPROMISE

In 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, why does Paul change his approach and preferences?

Suggested Response: Paul can change his approach, posture, habits, customs, and personal preferences. He can move toward Jews, Gentiles, and the weak in ways they can understand. But he cannot change the gospel, abandon obedience to Christ, or become dishonest in order to reach people. Paul says he is still "under Christ's law." His flexibility is not compromise. It is love. He removes unnecessary barriers so that different kinds of people can hear the same good news about Jesus.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: A DISCIPLINED LIFE FOR GOD'S MISSION

In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27, what does Paul's athletic imagery teach about a life arranged around the gospel?

Suggested Response: Paul compares the Christian life to a runner training for a race and a boxer who does not swing aimlessly. His point is that disciples should not live casually or without direction. Freedom in Christ is not permission to drift. Paul disciplines his body, desires, habits, and preferences because the mission is worth the cost. He is not trying to earn salvation. He is showing that a disciple's life should be intentionally ordered around the gospel so that One More meets Jesus.

LEADER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God calls them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

Leaders – share your story with your group. It takes 3-5 minutes. You are modeling this for your group, so follow the guidelines. (Click here for the guidelines).

Challenge – group people into 2's or 3's and have them prepare to share their story with each other next week. Set aside 15-20 minutes of your group time for this.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: In 1 Corinthians 9:1–6, Paul names rights he really had. What is a preference or expectation you tend to protect?

Suggested Response: I may quickly protect my comfort, schedule, reputation, money, opinions, personal space, or the way I think something should be done. Paul reminds us that having a real right does not mean I always need to use it. Sometimes love and mission call me to lay something down for the sake of someone else.

As your group responds, use follow-up questions to guide below surface-level responses. Encourage transparent responses.

QUESTION 2: Paul says he put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:12). What unnecessary barrier might your life place in front of someone hearing the gospel?

Suggested Response: An unnecessary barrier could be my tone, my impatience, my political arguments, my lack of hospitality, my unwillingness to listen, or my insistence on doing things only the way I prefer. The gospel itself may offend, but I do not want my pride or preferences to make it harder for someone to hear about Jesus.

QUESTION 3: In 1 Corinthians 9:15–18, Paul finds joy in preaching the gospel free of charge. Where might God be calling you to serve without needing recognition, credit, or repayment?

Suggested Response: God may be calling me to serve in my home, workplace, church, neighborhood, or group in a way that no one notices. Paul was not driven by applause or personal gain. He was driven by the stewardship God had entrusted to him. I can serve freely because Jesus has already given Himself freely for me.

QUESTION 4: Paul says he became all things to all people so that some might be saved (1 Corinthians 9:22). Who is one person you can trying harder to relate with?

Suggested Response: It may be a family member, neighbor, coworker, friend, or someone in my everyday routines who does not yet know Jesus. Moving toward them may require listening better, asking better

questions, entering their world, adjusting my approach, or giving up the need to be comfortable. I do not change the gospel, but I may need to change how I love and communicate.

QUESTION 5: What is one preference you could surrender so that One More person has a clearer path to Jesus?

Suggested Response: I may need to surrender a preference about my time, schedule, music, ministry style, comfort zone, social habits, or the kind of people I naturally spend time with. The issue is not preference itself. The issue is whether my preferences have become more important to me than people meeting Jesus.

QUESTION 6: In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27, Paul compares his life to an athlete in training. What part of your life needs more discipline for the sake of the mission?

Suggested Response: I may need discipline in prayer, Scripture, generosity, hospitality, speech, rest, time management, or courage in spiritual conversations. Paul does not drift through life. He orders his life around the gospel. If One More meeting Jesus matters, then my habits need to be shaped by that mission.

QUESTION 7: How can our group help one another pursue One More without turning evangelism into pressure or performance?

Suggested Response: Our group can pray for specific people by name, encourage one another to share honestly about Jesus, celebrate small steps of obedience, and help each other remove unnecessary barriers. We do not need to force conversations or manufacture results. We can live with intention, speak with love, and trust God to use our surrendered lives so that One More meets Jesus.

4 CHALLENGE

LEADER TIP

End your study time with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

A disciple is built different because they surrender rights and preferences so that One More meets Jesus. Paul had real freedom and real rights, but he refused to treat them as the center of his life. He was willing to be inconvenienced, misunderstood, unpaid, flexible, and disciplined if it helped remove unnecessary barriers to the gospel.

This week, ask God to show you where your life is more protected than surrendered.

- What right, preference, or comfort are you quickest to defend?
- Who is one person God may be calling you to move toward with greater intention?
- What unnecessary barrier could you remove so they have a clearer path to hear about Jesus?

Jesus gave Himself so we could be rescued and brought near to God. Now He sends us to live with that same heart for others. We do not change the gospel, but we gladly change our posture, habits, and approach so that One More might meet Jesus.

Let's pray.