

**That I May Win More**  
*1 Corinthians, Vol. 17*

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1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Considering your own convictions and interests, being careful of the fragility of weaker brothers, and ignoring the judgments of legalistic Christians, you should use your liberty in Christ to do whatever you can to build bridges of friendship and communication with non-Christians in your culture.

We define **culture** as the “beliefs, values, customs, and characteristics of a particular group.” To be used effectively by God to make disciples, we must learn to communicate within our culture.

Some Christians react wrongly to culture by \_\_\_\_\_ and thus isolating themselves. These are the Christians that have a message with no audience to hear it.

Some Christians react wrongly to culture by \_\_\_\_\_ themselves in it in which case they have an audience but no message in their lifestyle.

Some Christians wrongly react to culture by becoming \_\_\_\_\_ schizophrenics and living their lives two different ways, alternating between their “secular” life and their “spiritual” life.

The proper viewpoint toward the interaction of a Christian with his culture practiced by Jesus and Paul is \_\_\_\_\_. They were careful and wise to observe how they could best relate to people within their cultures.

**I. Personal Strategy**

Evangelism is much more than just leading someone to Jesus Christ. Your lifestyle is a strategic part of your message. Does your lifestyle agree with your message? See Titus 2:3-10.

Paul’s greatest emphasis was on the importance of the people of God being examples of the character of God \_\_\_\_\_ sharing the Gospel. To the Philippians he summarized “whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of Christ, then...I will know that you stand firm in one spirit contending as one man for the faith of the Gospel.” (Philippians 1:27)

Factors that seem to be related to the growth of the church in the book of Acts:

The closeness and the testimony of Christians caring for one another in Christ.

Persecution.

The purity of the fellowship of the believers.

The ministry of the early church to its most needy members.

Paul's radical conversion, confession, and change of lifestyle. *What was so effective was people \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ living transformed lives.*

It is not the responsibility of a non-Christian to accommodate himself to us in order to find the way to God. It is our responsibility to accommodate ourselves to him. Paul's strategy was designed so that he would win more than just the kind of people he would naturally gravitate to. Paul would reach out in the world around him wherever he found himself and do anything short of sin to relate to the people around him. He cultivated relationships with people who needed to hear the gospel by fitting into their culture.

Paul both limited his liberty by giving up his comforts and used his liberty to do things unnatural to him in order to reach people of all kinds.

Law of Christ: Jesus said that the whole law was fulfilled in loving God and loving one's neighbor.

Paul's missionary strategy was to start in the synagogue in any city where he possibly could and dialogue with the Jews for as long as possible, leading as many as possible to Christ. When he was thrown out of the synagogue, he would go wherever he could. **Lesson**: *Begin with the most natural point of contact – use all you have in common.*

Acts 15:5, 16:1-3: Although free from the law, Paul had Timothy circumcised so as not to offend the Jews. Despite Paul's efforts to maintain good relationships with Jewish Christians more problems were yet to come. Paul's success with the Gentiles had upset some of his Jewish brethren. When cultures clash it can be as turbulent as when two ocean currents intersect! It is important to notice that in this instance it was the older, supposedly more mature and much more knowledgeable Jewish believers who were the weaker brothers. *The weaker brother is the one who opposes things that \_\_\_\_\_ wrong.*

It is important to notice how well this strategy worked. Many appreciated the fact that Paul still respected their religious customs even though they were \_\_\_ binding on all believers. On the other hand, Acts 21:27-36 recounts that from among his Christian brothers came some of the most vicious persecution that Paul ever received. The charges were false, the motives were evil and from a human perspective one would say that the results were disastrous. Of course, that was not true from God's perspective.

If you use your liberty to build bridges to non-Christians, you might have the \_\_\_ of seeing a special blessing from God pronounced upon you. **LESSON**: *Do not let the pettiness and cruelty of misguided people deter you from evangelism.*

"Those who are without law" is a clear reference to Gentiles. Paul labored hard to give up his comfortable and familiar Jewish habits in order to reach Gentiles. See Acts 16:13-15. Staying in a Gentile home was not permissible for a Jew, since they considered Gentiles to be unclean.

When fitting, Paul was willing to play political hardball with the Romans, calling on his Roman citizenship in his defense. (See Acts 16:37). **LESSON:** *Use what you have according to the situation, but without sin.*

In proclaiming the gospel to the philosophers on Mars Hill, Paul even quoted (verse 28) a phrase from some Greek poetry to make his point. His argument did not rest on the quote; it only complemented it. (See Acts 17:19-21).

Paul was careful to conduct his life in such a way that he seemed to always have an \_\_\_\_\_ door to the Gentiles. He was willing to suffer false accusations at the hands of weaker brothers hung up on legalism in order to be effective with the larger potential audience among the Gentiles.

Paul was willing to work hard to relate to weaker believers: Either Jew or Gentile, Paul would lovingly respond to anyone who did not understand how free he really could be in Christ. His concern here was just as legitimate as his concern to reach both Jewish and Gentile non-Christians with the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 8:13: Paul did not become a vegetarian, but *he practiced his liberty selectively* depending upon who was around. Paul was always concerned to build up and to not offend.

Fellow partaker of it (Gospel): This implies Paul was looking forward to sharing all the future blessings of salvation with those to whom he ministered. Though absolutely confident of his salvation, Paul repeatedly makes allusions to the \_\_\_\_\_ loss of rewards for unfaithfulness.

**Application:** We must examine our lives to see what we are doing in order to become all things to all men to by all means save some. Looking at your liberty in Christ for what it means that you are free to do is selfish. There are many personal benefits of being set free in Christ, but we are not to be set free just for our \_\_\_\_\_ good.

To be in the world one has to be free to participate in the lives of those around him. Being separate means that we do this without compromising the sovereign rule of God in our hearts – in other words, without sinning.

Whether you like it or not, the way a Christian lives in the presence of those he seeks to win is a preview of what the non-Christian's life will become if he accepts what he is hearing. Jesus recognized this in principle when he said, "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone after he has been fully trained will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40)

People will be making decisions about whether or not to become a Christian based upon how \_\_\_\_\_ live your life around them. The more you portray things unique to your Christian subculture the less the non-Christian can relate to them. We must decide if our goal is to lead people to Christ or if our goal is to make people like us.

If we believe we must make people live just as we do in order to be Christians, we put ourselves in precisely the same category as the circumcision party in Acts 15 that gave Paul such a headache.

II. **Personal Motivation** (24-27)

1. Being entered in the contest does not guarantee winning a prize. That seems to be the reason Paul used this imagery in 3:10-15 where he spoke of spiritual activities made of wood, hay and straw being consumed and only those made of gold, silver and precious stones surviving God's examination and judgment of believers' works. *Paul is speaking here about \_\_\_\_\_ people to Christ.*
2. Prize-winning requires planning, self-control, hard work, sacrifice, and sometimes being uncomfortable. You never become a successful evangelist by accident.
3. Rewards can be forfeited. We are not talking about your salvation. But it is a very important matter how you conduct your life \_\_\_\_\_ you have become a Christian.

We must avoid being a "stumbling block." This refers to tripping up a person in some moral sense, causing a person to stumble into sin or unbelief. When the verb is used in the active voice it means "to give offense," while the passive denotes "to take offense." This distinction also holds up when the noun form of the word is used.

In the use of your liberty you are totally responsible to make sure that you do not cause someone to stumble. It is not your responsibility, however, to make absolutely certain that no one takes offense at what you do. The only time you will ever permanently cease from doing things at which someone might take offense is at your death. So, ignore the judgments of legalistic Christians.

The issue is deciding whether a person is a legalistic professional weaker brother or whether the person is one whom you can actually harm by what you are doing. How can you know if something you do is a genuine hindrance to someone or whether the person who objects to your doing something is trying to impose his own standard on you? Two guidelines may help. *First*, is the objecting person really trying to grow and make progress in his own spiritual life or is he simply a critic? If the former, help him out. But if the latter, ignore the complaint. *Second*, if \_\_\_\_\_ are affected, such as when crossing national/cultural boundaries, we must be sensitive to the situation and respond appropriately.

**CONCLUSION:** Develop our own personal strategy for living an evangelistic lifestyle. Fish where the fish are.

What is your personal strategy going to be?