

Summit Woods Baptist Church
First Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

❖ Day 1

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

For these lessons, the sermon text is provided in a format that visually helps display the structure of the paragraph or section of text. The main verbs are underlined. The main clauses remain to the left, and the supporting clauses are either directly underneath when they have equal priority to what comes before, or are tabbed to the right when the clause supports, develops, or draws a conclusion from a neighboring clause.

¹⁹For

though I am free from all,

I have made myself a servant to all,

that I might win more of them.

²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew,
in order to win Jews.

To those under the law I became as one under the law
(though not being myself under the law)
that I might win those under the law.

²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law
(not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ)
that I might win those outside the law.

²²To the weak I became weak,
that I might win the weak.

I have become all things to all people,
that by all means I might save some.

²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel,
that I may share with them in its blessings.

1. 'For' connects this paragraph to what precedes it. What previous thoughts does Paul expand on in this paragraph?

2. How does Paul describe himself in verse 19a?

a. In this state, who is he obligated to serve?

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3. What does he say that he has made himself to be in verse 19b? To whom does he obligate himself?
4. In last year's Introduction to 1 Corinthians, we learned that Corinth has a very status-oriented society, with people constantly seeking to rise in the social status ranks. How would the Corinthians likely view Paul's decision in verse 19?
5. Why does he say that he has chosen to be a servant to all?
6. What does he mean by "might win"? What else in the text helps you answer this?
7. List the four categories of people Paul mentions in verses 20-22a whom he has become like.

❖ Day 2

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 again.

8. By birth, Paul is in fact a Jew, so why would he say that he "became as a Jew"?
9. In speaking about those "under the law" in verse 20b, to what law is Paul referring?
10. Who are those "outside the law"?

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11. Why do you think that Paul thinks it is important to clarify his *actual* relationship to the law from the way he *becomes* toward the law?

12. Who are “the weak”? Do you think the “weak” in verse 22 are the same “weak” ones Paul referred to in 8:9? Why or why not?

13. Earlier in chapter 9, Paul was explicit about giving up his right to receive pay from the Corinthians for the sake of the gospel’s work among them. List examples of some things he might give up or do in becoming like each of these categories of people.

14. We can see in 6:12-13 and 10:23 that the Corinthians do not highly value self-restraint. On the surface, it could seem that Paul likewise operates without restraint in constantly adapting himself to others. But what restraint does Paul say governs him?

15. In verses 20-21, Paul says that he is “not...under the law,” “not...outside the law of God,” and “under the law of Christ” all at the same time. (It may be helpful to substitute ‘covenant’ for ‘law’.) Read Galatians 3:10-12 and Hebrews 8:6-13 to help you answer the following questions.
 - a. What is “the law” in verse 20?

 - b. What is “the law of Christ” in verse 21?

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- c. What is “the law of God” in verse 21?
- d. How is Paul “not under,” “not outside,” and “under” all of these at the same time?

16. According to verse 23, why has Paul made himself a servant to all?

❖ Day 3

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 again.

- 17. How does this week’s passage relate to Paul’s stated goal in 9:12 of not putting an obstacle in the way of the gospel?
- 18. In verse 23b, “that I may share with them in its blessings” could also be translated “that I may become a fellow partaker of it.” In what ways might Paul see his presenting the gospel as a way to partake of the gospel? And what sorts of blessings might he hope to share in?
- 19. With the best of intentions, some have gone too far in relating to the lost in the hopes of gaining an opportunity to share the gospel and instead have hindered their witness or distorted the gospel’s message. Describe how someone might go too far today in trying to relate to the lost.

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20. Missionaries in other countries constantly have to think about how to relate across cultural barriers to the people they are trying to reach, but they are not the only ones who should learn from Paul. Give at least one example of how you could follow Paul's example in sharing the gospel with people here in Kansas City. (How could you become like someone else in our city for the purpose of taking the gospel to them?)

21. In 11:1 at the end of this larger section, Paul says, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." How is Paul imitating Christ in this week's passage?

22. How has this week's passage encouraged and/or convicted you?

23. Synthesize this week's passage into one sentence.

In preparation for Sunday, pray that the Lord would give us specific wisdom in how to relate to the lost people around us so that we may "win more of them."