

## Week 15 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

**Text:** 1 Cor 9:1-18

**Icebreaker:** What are you hoping to see happen in your life this coming year?  
Any resolutions for 2025?

**Leaders—It's a new year, so here's a fresh reminder that these questions are a guide, not a script. Choose what's helpful, modify it to make it better, and there's no expectation that you should get to each question. While God's Word is inspired (2 Tim 3:16-17), these questions are not!**

**1.** Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

**2.** In verses 1 through 14, Paul defends his rights even as he explains his rationale for not exercising them! What reason does he give for setting aside his rights?

Paul says in v. 12 that he would rather "endure anything" than to "put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ." To unpack this statement, this was a time and place where traveling, professional speakers would make their way into a city like Corinth to entertain and impress crowds of people for money. In addition, it was common for those who financed the livelihood of others to exert a level of authority over them. Paul wants to distance himself (or, more specifically, the gospel message he proclaims) from the entertainers looking to impress others for pay, AND he wants to be free of the influence of those in Corinth who might attempt to control his ministry as they help finance it.

*Application:* Can you think of a situation where you or someone else chose to set aside a right, perhaps to help someone else? Explain what happened.

This could be very simple. For example, have you ever decided to let another person speak first while you listened first even though you had the right to talk? A person may decide to apologize first as a way to bring about reconciliation. Etc., etc.

**3.** Verse 12 expresses Paul's commitment to "endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ." In a general sense, what did Paul endure to proclaim the gospel? (For help, see 2 Cor 11:24-29)

This passage from 2 Corinthians may be most helpful. Paul wasn't just speaking hyperbolically by saying he'd "endure anything." He literally did endure whatever he faced in order to carry out his ministry. A skim through Acts 14 and 16-17 is also helpful in seeing what Paul endured leading up to his ministry in Corinth. There were many

opportunities for Paul to go find another line of work or to at least do his work in a way that would have been less costly. That was of no interest to him, though.

*Application:* In what ways might a commitment to the gospel cost us today?

**4.** In verses 15-18, Paul details his rationale for not seeking his right of material support from the Corinthians. How would this have made Paul's ministry in Corinth more difficult?

Paul was likely fatigued from working as a "tentmaker" in addition to doing ministry in the city. He would have lost sleep and had his attention divided by multiple areas of concern. Socially, Paul opted to be free of the obligations to people financing his ministry ("patrons") but these relationships also were a source of social status in the city. Having a prominent patron could boost another's social prominence. Overall, we could see how Paul's ministry would have been far more efficient had he let the Corinthians supply him with the material resources needed for ministry.

What outcome was Paul seeking by presenting the gospel "free of charge" in Corinth even though it made his ministry more difficult?

Paul is seeking to present the gospel "free of charge," but by that, he also means "free of obstacles" or distortions for the Corinthians' sake. Financial support from the Corinthians could too easily lead to distortions of the gospel message so that the gospel would become just another message in Corinth's streets.

*Application:* Under what circumstances do you think ministry should be "free of charge" in our day? Why?

Here are a couple thoughts to consider. First, ministry always requires resources—time, energy, money, etc. Second, we can think of how some forms of ministry are often done "free of charge" to those being ministered to—student/college ministry, overseas missions, etc. In such cases, though, the ministry isn't actually free; others who are not being directly ministered to are providing the resources.

**5. *Application:*** It's instinctual for us to insist on our rights, privileges, and entitlements. Are there areas of life where you may be clinging to "your rights" in a way that's an obstacle in your ministry?

For example, are you exercising a "right" that's...

- ...hurting a relationship? (For example, a right to express my opinion whenever I have one.)
- ...limiting your investment into others' lives? (For example, my right to relax alone in the evenings after a hard day's work rather than engage with family or friends.)
- ...keeping you from giving more generously of your time and resources? (For example, my right to buy more stuff for myself with my hard-earned money or to spend my weekends free of any commitment.)

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If you're not sure how to answer, prayerfully ask the Lord to reveal this to you over time.

This might be better as a question to take home and pray about. You might consider including this in your group prayer time, asking God to reveal how a "right" is getting in the way of sacrificial ministry.

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