

Week 16 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

LEADERS: AS A REMINDER, PICK QUESTIONS FROM BELOW THAT SEEM MOST HELPFUL AND/OR MODIFY THEM TO BEST SUIT YOUR GROUP. THERE'S NO EXPECTATION THAT YOU SHOULD ANSWER EACH ONE. SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER TO GO DEEPER ON 2-3 QUESTIONS THAN TO QUICKLY RUN THROUGH ALL 5.

Text: 1 Cor 9:19-27

Icebreaker: Name one person who has taken a sacrificial level of interest in your life. What did they do to show interest in you?

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

2. Paul says in verse 19 that he has made himself a servant to all so that he "might win more of them." What role do you think the mindset of a servant can play for encouraging others to trust in Jesus?

Here are a few thoughts: A servant mindset is one that, among other things, favors the other person. It's a mindset that looks out for the interests of someone else and seeks to do what is best for that person rather than for oneself. This makes for effective evangelism because it communicates a genuine care and concern for another person. There's nothing more distasteful than an "evangelist" who comes with a self-advancing agenda, seeking to prove a point or meet a quota!

Application: What do you think it could look like to be a servant to unbelievers near you?

3. In verses 20-22, Paul says, "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." What do you think it means to "become all things to all people"?

It is sometimes thought that this is a license to engage in vices that unbelievers are engaged in or to compromise morally alongside of others in order to "become like them." Surely this is not what Paul means! Instead, Paul was willing to meet people where they were at. He would bend to their own interests and practices whenever it was possible (in other words, not sinful or unwise) so that he might have influence in others' lives. This was a man who, for example, had the ability to speak extensively about the Old

Testament when around Jews, but who could just as well present the gospel to Greek philosophers by referencing their own writings (see Acts 17).

Application: Consider unbelievers in your sphere of influence. What do you think it could mean for you to “become like them,” yet without compromising your commitments to Jesus?

4. In verses 24-27, the emphasis is on running to win the prize! It’s very possible to press the metaphor too far, but what are some typical struggles and sacrifices a winning athlete needs to commit to?

We could take this too far by saying, for example, that the Christian life is competitive, so that we are racing against each other and there can only be one winner! Instead, the point is that the mindset of the athlete is one of deep commitment and a willingness to sacrifice for the goal. Such a person takes on a whole-life discipline so that training, sleep, diet, etc. are all oriented toward winning. You could drill down deeper into each of these aspects to think of how athletes might give up free time or set a rigorous schedule that allows them to wake up early to train.

Application: A mindset of winning is not the same as one of merely participating. What do you think is different between the life of someone who’s set on “winning” as they follow Jesus in comparison to someone who’s merely coasting along, hoping for a participation ribbon in the end?

5. Self-control and discipline are key traits for any athlete. What role do they play in a Christian’s life?

This is similar to the previous question but with closer attention to self-control. Two of the major issues the Corinthians are facing, which will become clearer in next week’s passage, is that of sexual immorality and diet (food sacrificed to idols). Notice that these are two areas of life where people tend to be most impulsive! Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit according to Galatians 5:22, so we should understand that it’s not something we merely generate on our own. We need it in order to resist temptation but also to discipline our lives with regular practices that encourage spiritual growth...prayer, meditating on Scripture, community with others, generosity with our time and resources, service toward others, etc.

Application: How have self-control and discipline been a part of your own experience in following Jesus? Take time to pray as a group that we all would continuously grow in these traits so that we, like Paul, would run to win the prize!

Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.