

Week of May 11, 2025 - Slave to Everyone | Small Group Lesson 21

Connect

Think about a time you had to change your behavior, way of talking, or even your style to fit in or connect with a new group. This could be starting at a new school/job, visiting a different country or region, or joining a new church. What was that situation? What did you change or adapt? How did it go?

Verses - 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 (CSB)

Read aloud:

19 Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law – though I myself am not under the law – to win those under the law. 21 To those who are without the law, like one without the law – though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ – to win those without the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. 23 Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings. 24 Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. 25 Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. 26 So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. 27 Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Briefly restate the context. How is it encouraging, challenging, comforting, etc.?

Study

Answer the questions together based on the Bible verses:

1. In v.19, Paul describes a contrast: he is "free and belongs to no one," yet he has made himself a "slave to everyone." According to this verse, what is his reason for making himself a "slave to everyone"? (v.23)

2. Looking closely at verses 20-22, list at least three different groups of people Paul adapted his approach for. How does his behavior change with each group? Why is it important for him to point out concerning the Jewish law saying, “I am not without God’s law but under the law of Christ”?

3. According to verse 25, what do athletes do to prepare for competition? What is the difference between the "crown" (prize) the athletes strive for and the "crown" Paul says believers are striving for (vv.24-27)?

Share

Discuss 1:
In an illustration Pastor Takeshi shared, a father and his young son talked about loving ants inside an anthill. The father suggested the best way to do this was to become an ant. Read Matthew 11:19. How did Christ himself do what Paul is suggesting, in today’s verses? How should you?

Discuss 2:
Paul adapted his approach for different people. When do you think it's good and helpful to adapt towards different people? When might "becoming like others" cross a line? How did Paul make sure he didn't negatively compromise his faith while adapting (hint: look at the end of verse 21)?

Minister to one another through sharing specific prayer requests.