

1 Corinthians 9-16

New Life in Christ

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ONE

THE JOY OF SACRIFICE

**Read 1 Corinthians 9;
other references as given.**

In the first study on 1 Corinthians (chapters 1–8) you learned that there is more to the Christian life than trusting Jesus Christ for eternal life. Salvation is the end of man’s need for redemption, but it is the beginning of an entirely new life in Christ. The apostle Paul said “Through him [Christ] we have confidently entered into this new relationship of grace, and here we take our stand, in happy certainty of the glorious things he has for us in the future” (Romans 5:2, J B Phillips translation).

The Corinthians didn’t fully embrace their new life because they allowed the so-called wisdom of man (man-made philosophies) to control their thinking. Paul acknowledged them as believers (1 Corinthians 1:2, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 11:2), but he rebuked them for not moving on to spiritual maturity (1 Corinthians 3:1–4, 4:18–19). In 1 Corinthians 9–16 Paul warns the Corinthians about God’s discipline if they continue their worldly ways (chapters 9–10). He reproves them for their irreverent approach to public worship (chapters 11–14) and for doubting the reality of the believer’s future resurrection (chapter 15). He concludes the letter with some helpful teaching on financial stewardship before he offers a heartfelt farewell (chapter 16).

In chapter 9 Paul continues to correct the Corinthians’ misinterpretation of the doctrine of Christian liberty. The Bible defines Christian liberty—not as an endorsement of the believer’s pursuit of selfish desires, but as God-given freedom for Christians



Lombardi Time Principle

When the leader arrives 10-15 minutes early, he or she has time to pray, prepare the room, and greet the participants personally.

ADD GROUP
INSIGHTS BELOW

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

to live a new way of life according to His will (Galatians 2:4; 5:1). Paradoxically, the believer has been freed from sin to be a slave of Jesus Christ, and ironically, this is the ultimate freedom man can experience (John 8:32; 2 Corinthians 3:17). Before you begin each lesson in this study, ask God to reveal Himself through His Word and to transform you into the image of His Son.

1. First Corinthians 9 begins with four rhetorical questions, all assuming a “yes” answer (1 Corinthians 1). Paul uses the questions to reassert himself as God’s apostolic representative and to help the Corinthians accept his teaching as authoritative. A Christian’s perspective on the authority of God’s Word will invariably affect his spiritual growth. Which of the following statements reflects your view of God’s Word? Seriously consider your answer. Don’t answer the question the way you think it should be answered.

- ☐ The Bible offers us wisdom, but some of it is a bit out-dated. I always decide for myself what to accept.
- ☐ The Bible is like Aesop’s fables. Great stories and wise sayings that you can apply to your life. Nothing more.
- ☐ The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. I believe it is true and I seek to live by it.
- ☐ The Bible is authoritative, but it is not truly inspired. The Holy Spirit must bring it to life, and He does. When the Holy Spirit reveals God to you, it becomes God’s Word.
- ☐ The Bible is God’s Word, but only the New Testament applies to Christians. The Old Testament is for the Jews.

2. Some of the Corinthians doubted Paul’s spiritual authority (1 Corinthians 9:3). Why didn’t they regard him as a true apostle and a spiritual authority in their lives (1 Corinthians 9:2–6)?

3. Paul defended his apostleship by presenting three examples of people who have the right to be compensated for their work (1 Corinthians 9:7). The soldier receives wages for his service, the farmer eats the produce from his fields, and the shepherd drinks milk from his animals. Paul appealed to the Old Testament to prove that those who provide spiritual instruction have the right to be compensated for their work (Deuteronomy 25:4). His appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures demonstrates its importance in the lives of New Testament Christians. What do the following verses teach about the importance and application of the Old Testament?

i. Luke 24:13–27: _____

ii. 2 Timothy 3:16–17: _____

4. Restate Paul's conclusion in your own words (1 Corinthians 9:11).



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5. Why did Paul not exercise his right to be financially supported by the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 9:12, 15)?

6. The phrase **Do you not know** (1 Corinthians 9:13) indicates that Paul had previously taught the Corinthians about their responsibility to provide material things to those who have dedicated themselves to teaching God's Word. He supported his argument with an Old Testament illustration to prove that financially supporting God's servants is consistent with his teaching. Aaron, Moses' brother, and his descendants served as priests (Exodus 28) and they were given the right to partake of the sacrificial offerings. What were the Jewish people required to provide those who dedicated themselves to the Lord's service (Numbers 18:21)?

7. God also chose the Levites to be His official servants. The Levites were members of the Israelite tribe named after their patriarch (a male head of a family, clan, or tribe; Numbers 1:50).

- a. How were the Levites to honor the Lord with the tithes they received from the people (Numbers 18:26)?

- b. Choose the words that describe *your* view of providing financial support to those who serve God vocationally and dedicate themselves to the preaching and teaching of His Word.

☐ obligation ☐ unnecessary ☐ duty
☐ privilege ☐ partnership ☐ stewardship
☐ debt ☐ benevolence ☐ exchange
☐ charitable giving ☐ a waste of money
☐ an act of worship ☐ God's command
☐ a bad investment

Why did you choose these words? _____

8. What did Paul say about his need to proclaim the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16–18)?

9. Paul willingly sacrificed his right to financial support so the Corinthians would not think that he was doing it for personal gain. He also tailored his ministry approach to different ethnic groups without compromising the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). What *do you think* Paul meant by the following statements?

- a. **To the Jews I became as a Jew:**



Using table tents will help visitors feel more comfortable when they attend the group. If you are meeting online, encourage the participants to “rename” themselves if necessary.

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b. **To those who are under the law, as under the law:**

c. **To those who are without law, as without law:**

d. **To the weak I became as weak:**

10. Paul had a passionate desire to reach the lost for Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19–23; Romans 9:1–3; 10:1) and every Christian should have a similar desire to see non-Christians be saved. Choose the statements that reflect your attitude toward those without Christ.

- ☐ Like Paul, I do all I can to see them saved.
- ☐ I am not concerned about the unsaved. I rarely think about their eternal destiny. God will save them if He wants to.
- ☐ I'm concerned about the unsaved, but I am more afraid of what other people might think about me if I talk to people about Jesus and salvation.
- ☐ It bothers me, but I can't do anything about it.
- ☐ Oh Lord, give me a greater passion for the lost.



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11. Paul gave the Corinthians another example of how a believer should live (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). The Isthmian Games were held in Corinth the year before and after the Olympic Games which were held every four years in Rome. Winners of the Isthmian games were awarded laurel wreaths that eventually wilted, but Christians can win an imperishable prize for their faithful service to God (1 Corinthians 9:25).

a. List three things a victorious athlete and a godly Christian have in common (1 Corinthians 9:24–27).

1. _____
_____ (v. ____).

2. _____
_____ (v. ____).

3. _____
_____ (v. ____).

b. What *do you think* Paul meant when he said **lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified** (1 Corinthians 9:27)?

12. What are the most important spiritual truths you learned from this passage of Scripture?

1 Corinthians 9–16: New Life in Christ

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LEADER'S GUIDE

Lesson 1: The Joy of Sacrifice

1. Answers will vary. The correct answer is “The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. I believe it is true, and I seek to live by it.”
2. Paul worked often as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) to provide for his own needs so he would not be a financial burden on the Corinthians. Rather than seeing this as an act of sacrifice, some of the Corinthians interpreted Paul and Barnabas’ efforts as evidence that they were not true apostles who were worthy of their respect and financial support.
3.
 - i. Luke 24:13–27: The Old Testament prophesies Christ’s death and resurrection (Luke 24:26). It also reveals Jesus in every portion of the Old Testament (the Law [of Moses], the prophets, and the writings). The same could be said of the New Testament. Christians, however, shouldn’t look for images or hidden illustrations of Jesus in every verse or passage of Scripture. This is called the allegorical method of interpretation, which is an incorrect method of interpreting God’s Word.
 - ii. 2 Timothy 3:16–17: All Scripture, including the Old Testament, is inspired by God and profitable for New Testament believers. The common misconception that the Old Testament was written only for the Jews is refuted by these verses. When Paul wrote these words, he was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. Both the Old and New Testaments are divinely inspired and profitable for Christians.
4. Answers will vary, but they could include the following: Those who dedicate themselves to the teaching and preaching of God’s Word have the right to receive material things (financial support) from those who are taught the Word.
5. Paul didn’t want the work of the Lord to be jeopardized in any way (**lest we might hinder the gospel**). He said that he would rather die than have the Corinthians think he was preaching the truth for financial gain (1 Corinthians 9:12, 15).

6. The Jewish people were required to give their tithe to the Levites whom God appointed to serve Him and the people.
7.
 - a. The Levites were also required to give a tithe of what they received from the people.
 - b. Answers will vary.
8. God placed a burden on Paul's heart (**for necessity is laid upon me**, v. 16) to preach the Word. If Paul accepted this responsibility willingly, he would receive a reward from God. If Paul didn't do it willingly, he was still obligated to God to preach the Word, but he wouldn't receive a reward. He said that he would preach the gospel to the Corinthians without their feeling obligated to provide financial support (**without charge**) for him (1 Corinthians 9:18).
9.
 - a. God called Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8), but he regularly encountered Jews on his missionary travels. Paul was willing to submit to Jewish traditions (Acts 21:23–36), but not to the point of compromising the gospel. Paul was a Jewish Christian, and this meant that he followed Christ without turning his back on his Jewish heritage. For the early Jewish believers, being a good Christian didn't mean being a bad Jew.
 - b. To those who were practicing the Jewish faith (both Jews and Gentile proselytes) Paul was willing to adapt himself and his ministry to work with them, but without compromising the gospel. He had Timothy, who was partly Jewish, circumcised **because of the Jews in that region** (Acts 16:1–3). If Timothy had gone with Paul without being circumcised, the Jews might have stumbled over Timothy's and Paul's testimonies. On the other hand, Paul refused to have Titus (a Gentile) circumcised because it might cause the Gentiles (non-Jews) to believe that an individual had to obey the Old Testament Law of Moses to be saved (Galatians 2:1–5). Circumcision was a sign or indicator that someone was obligating himself to obey the Law of Moses, and Christians are not under the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:19–25).
 - c. Paul ministered to Gentiles like the Corinthians without making Jewish customs and traditions a test or condition of being a follower of Christ.

- d. Paul is likely referring to weak (immature) believers (1 Corinthians 8:9–11) who are still wrestling with their relationship to Christ and the world. Paul was willing to meet these weak believers where they were rather than flaunting his freedom in Christ.
10. Answers will vary.
11. a. 1. The athlete and the Christian must demonstrate personal discipline to be successful (**temperate in all things**, 1 Corinthians 9:25).
2. The athlete and the Christian must focus on the ultimate goal (1 Corinthians 9:26).
3. The athlete and the Christian must learn how to control their fleshly appetites as well as their emotions to win the prize (1 Corinthians 9:27).
- b. The Greek word for disqualified (*adokimos*) means “unapproved.” In other passages of Scripture, it often refers to the unsaved (Romans 1:28; Titus 1:16), but Paul is not addressing salvation in this context. He is concerned about what a believer *can do* to win a race or a fight. This is not the language of salvation in the New Testament. Unlike the brother who is indulging in immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1–5) or those who experienced death for their irreverence during the Lord’s Supper, Paul did not want his ministry or life to be cut short by God’s disciplinary disapproval.
12. Answers will vary.

Lesson 2: Don’t Crave Evil Things

1. a. The Israelites enjoyed the benefit of God’s divine guidance. They were led by a divinely guided cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night. Christians are guided by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit.
- b. The Israelites were baptized into Moses (immersed into Moses’ leadership), which means they were united with him as their spiritual head who was God’s spokesman for their journey. Christians have been united with Christ as their spiritual head, and earthly spiritual leaders (pastors, elders, wise believers) provide spiritual guidance for their journey through life.