

Influencing for Christ

Believers represent God by using their influence to bring others to Him.



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27; 10:31-33; 11:1

January 27, 2019/January 30, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27; 10:31-33; 11:1

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. ²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— ³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

¹ Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

FIRST THOUGHTS

- Who has influenced your life the most? How?
- Whose life have you influenced the most? What might be keeping you from being a person of influence?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Our Scripture passage this week brings into clearer focus the stewardship of influence. How we live before others really does matter. Paul's concern for the Corinthians was that they underestimated their influence in bringing others to Christ. Rather than living in self-focused ways, Paul challenged his readers (and us) to run the race in the right way, with the right goals in mind. Let's consider how to adorn—and not hinder—the gospel of Christ with our lives.

Paul's letter to the Corinthian believers addressed a few matters they asked about in a letter to him (1 Cor. 7:1). He already tackled divisions in the church (chaps. 1–4), issues regarding sexual immorality (chaps. 5–6), and marriage and singleness (chap. 7). In chapters 8–10, Paul focused his attention on another question posed to him by the Corinthian church: Was it appropriate for believers to eat food sacrificed to idols?

The issue was deeper than just eating food. It was an issue of understanding the nature of Christian liberty and the priority of love over selfish gain. The brothers or sisters for whom Christ died are much more important than the freedom to eat food sacrificed to idols (8:11).

The stewardship of influence was important to Paul. One's influence on a brother or sister in Christ to either help them or harm them is worthy of deep consideration and application. One's influence on unbelievers for the sake of the gospel must not be underestimated either. In chapter 9, Paul specifically expanded on this idea. Finally, Paul used ancient Israel as a negative example for what falling into idolatry can produce (10:1-12). Today's lesson will consider how believers represent the Lord by using their influence to bring others to him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

WALKING IN THEIR SHOES

> Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

- What did Paul demonstrate was more important than anything else?

- ° What method did Paul use to influence people?
- ° Why was winning people to Christ so important to Paul?

RUNNING IN THE RACE

> Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

- ° How did Paul demonstrate the importance of reaching his goal of winning people to Christ?
- ° What boundaries did Paul establish for himself?
- ° What boundaries have you established for yourself? For your family? Spend some time discussing these as a group.

FOLLOWING OUR LEADER

> Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; 11:1

- ° How did Paul move the Corinthians from thinking about themselves to thinking about others?
- ° Why did Paul say, "Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ" (11:1)?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Believers represent God by using their influence to bring others to Him.

- ° Paul's overarching purpose was to influence people and win them for Christ. How can we follow Paul's example?

Personal Challenge: Evaluate your attitude while among unbelievers. Do you seek to develop a rapport, or do you arrogantly avoid being in contact with them? Make a commitment to influence others for Christ.

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 which describe how we are to love our Christian brother and sisters.
- Which aspect of love do you struggle with the most? Which one comes easily to you?
- Next week is Super Sunday – a special day not to be missed! Who will you invite? Who has not been in a while that you could reach out to?

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

27th – Exodus 17-20; Acts 3 | **28th** – Exodus 21-22; Psalm 12; Acts 4 | **29th** – Exodus 23-24; Psalm 14; Acts 5 | **30th** – Exodus 25-27; Acts 6 | **31st** – Exodus 28-29; Acts 7 | **1st** – Exodus: 30-32; Acts 8 | **2nd** – Exodus 33-34; Psalm 16; Acts 9