

## Whatever It Takes: Laying Down Our Rights for the Gospel

### 1 Corinthians 9:1–27

#### Student Devotional

This 5-day devotional is all about **choosing the gospel over our own rights**. We live in a culture that tells us to **fight for what's ours**—our time, money, comfort, and personal freedoms. But Paul flips that idea on its head. Instead of clinging to his **rights**, he willingly **gave them up** so that nothing would stop people from hearing about Jesus.

So the big question is: **What are we willing to sacrifice so that more people can know Christ?**

### Day 1: Giving Up Your Rights for Something Greater

#### Scripture:

**“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? ... the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 9:1, 14 ESV)**

#### Think About It:

Imagine training for a marathon. You have the right to eat junk food, stay up late, and skip workouts. But if you want to win the race, you choose **discipline over comfort**. That's exactly how Paul approached sharing the gospel.

Paul had **every right** to receive financial support as an apostle. But he *chose* not to take it. Why? Because he didn't want anything—**not even money**—to get in the way of someone hearing about Jesus. He wasn't saying pastors shouldn't be supported (in fact, he says the opposite in verse 14). But for him, the **mission was more important than his personal entitlements**.

What about us? Do we ever **hold on to our rights so tightly** that they become barriers to the gospel?

**Pray It:**

Lord, help me see my life as a mission field, not just a place to secure my own comfort. Show me where I might be holding on to things that could be laid down for the sake of Your kingdom.

**Do It:**

Think about a time when your **own comfort, preferences, or rights** got in the way of serving someone else. What's one way you can shift your mindset this week to prioritize **the gospel over personal convenience**?

## Day 2: Freedom Means Serving, Not Demanding

**Scripture:**

**“But I have made no use of any of these rights... I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.” (1 Corinthians 9:15, 19 ESV)**

**Think About It:**

When you hear the word "**freedom**," what comes to mind? Probably things like **independence, choices, and doing what you want**. But Paul saw **freedom differently**—not as a way to serve himself, but as a chance to **serve others**.

He had **freedom** to demand financial support. He had **freedom** to preach without hardship. But instead, he **gave up his rights** to remove any obstacle between people and Jesus.

This is where it gets real:

- Are we **willing to inconvenience ourselves** so others can know Christ?
- Do we make **excuses** for why we can't serve—"I don't have time," "That's not my calling," "I've done enough already"?
- Are we **consumed with our own rights** or committed to **bringing people to Jesus**?

**Pray It:**

God, make me a servant like Paul. Help me stop asking, "*What's in it for me?*" and start asking, "*How can I lay down my life for the gospel?*"

**Do It:**

Look at your **weekly schedule**. Where are you prioritizing yourself over others? Find one way to **serve** this week—maybe volunteering at church, reaching out to a neighbor, or making time for someone who needs encouragement.

## Day 3: Becoming “All Things to All People” (Without Compromising)

**Scripture:**

**“To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews... To those under the law I became as one under the law... To the weak I became weak... I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:20–22 ESV)**

**Think About It:**

Paul wasn’t fake. He wasn’t a **people-pleaser** who changed himself just to fit in. But he **adapted** his approach so that more people could hear about Jesus.

Think of it like this:

- **If you were a missionary in Japan**, you’d learn Japanese instead of insisting everyone speak English.
- **If you were trying to reach college students**, you’d probably use social media rather than handing out paper flyers.
- **If you were ministering to someone struggling**, you wouldn’t hit them with a list of rules—you’d show grace and walk with them patiently.

Paul’s point? **The gospel doesn’t change, but our approach should be flexible.** The mission is more important than our **preferences, comfort zones, or traditions.**

**Pray It:**

Jesus, help me step out of my comfort zone for the sake of others. Give me wisdom to **meet people where they are** without ever compromising the truth of Your Word.

### Do It:

This week, pay attention to someone **who's different from you**—maybe in their beliefs, background, or struggles. Instead of avoiding the topic, **ask questions, listen well, and look for ways to build a relationship.**

## Day 4: Run the Race Like It Matters

### Scripture:

**“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.” (1 Corinthians 9:24 ESV)**

### Think About It:

Athletes **train hard** for a reason. They don't just jog aimlessly—they have a **goal**, and they structure their entire lives around **winning**.

Paul says our faith should be the same. We don't just **drift** into holiness. We don't **accidentally** grow in our relationship with God. Just like an athlete **disciplines** their body, we have to be **intentional** about our faith.

But here's the difference: The **world's prize** is temporary—gold medals fade, trophies collect dust. But the **prize for following Jesus** is eternal.

So ask yourself:

- Am I **giving God my best**, or just coasting?
- Am I **training in prayer, Scripture, and obedience**, or just hoping I'll “grow” without effort?
- Do I live like my **faith actually matters**?

### Pray It:

Lord, I don't want to run aimlessly. Help me train my heart, mind, and actions so I can **finish the race well** and honor You with my life.

Sept 8 – **Sept 14, 2025**

### Do It:

Set a **spiritual training goal** for this week—maybe waking up early to read Scripture, cutting out distractions during prayer, or fasting from social media for a day. **Commit to disciplined growth.**

## Day 5: Don't Just Start Strong—Finish Well

### Scripture:

“I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

*(1 Corinthians 9:27 ESV)*

### Think About It:

It's one thing to **start strong**. It's another thing to **finish well**.

Plenty of people **start** their faith journey excited—reading the Bible, going to church, sharing their faith. But along the way, **distractions creep in**. Life gets busy. Comfort takes over. And before they know it, they're barely running at all.

Paul was **determined not to let that happen**. He didn't want to tell others about Jesus and then **fall off track himself**. He knew it would take **discipline, self-control, and daily commitment** to stay faithful to the end.

What about you? Are you still **running the race**, or have you gotten a little lazy?

### Pray It:

Jesus, I don't want to just *start* strong—I want to *finish* strong. Keep my heart on fire for You. Give me endurance, discipline, and focus so that nothing pulls me away from Your calling.

### Do It:

Think about a **spiritual habit** you've started but let slip (prayer, Bible reading, serving, sharing your faith). This week, **restart** it. Run your race with purpose.

## You're Ready for Class!

Over these five days, you've seen how **giving up our rights, serving others, and running with endurance** leads to a life that truly honors Christ. The question now is:

**What's one thing you're willing to lay down so that more people can know Jesus?**

Come to class ready to share your answer—and let's commit to doing **whatever it takes** for the gospel!

## Before We Gather

- What are some “rights” or freedoms people in our culture are especially quick to defend, and how might these sometimes conflict with gospel priorities?
- What might it look like in our daily lives to “become all things to all people” without compromising biblical truth?
- What are some practical ways we can cultivate spiritual discipline so that our Christian witness remains strong?
- How can we as a church adopt Paul's mindset of making ourselves “servants” to others so that more people can come to know Christ?
- What are some common obstacles—personal, cultural, or institutional—that might hinder people from hearing the gospel clearly? How can we remove or reduce them?
- How can we help one another develop spiritual disciplines so that no one “runs aimlessly” in their faith?