



LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES [1 CORINTHIANS 9]

Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 9 challenges believers to consider how they use their God-given freedom. While Christians are free in Christ, that freedom is never meant to be wielded selfishly or in ways that create obstacles to others knowing Jesus. Instead, Paul models a posture of surrender: giving up rights (when necessary) and seeking not personal advantage but the good of one's neighbor. Freedom, then, becomes a tool for mission—not for self-protection or indulgence, but for building up others and glorifying Christ.

Paul describes his life as one of intentional adaptation: "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." His words remind us that apprenticeship to Jesus requires flexibility, humility, and the willingness to step into another person's shoes for the sake of the gospel. Christian freedom, rightly understood, is exercised through service, encouragement, and love. The call is not only to ask, "*Am I free to do this?*" but more importantly, "*Will my choice help others know Jesus and bring glory to God?*"

To drive the point home, Paul employs the imagery of athletics. The life of discipleship is like a marathon: slow, painful, and filled with setbacks, yet marked by growth and progress. Just as athletes discipline themselves for a perishable crown, followers of Jesus practice spiritual discipline for an eternal one. Self-discipline is not about legalism but about aligning life with Christ so that freedom leads to faithfulness. In Paul's view, freedom, service, and discipline are inseparable—they form the racecourse on which believers run toward the imperishable prize of life with Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul asks believers to give up their rights if doing so would remove an obstacle to someone experiencing Jesus. What does this look like in your daily life, and where do you find it most difficult to practice?
2. "To the weak I became weak..." How can we humbly enter the experiences of people who are different from us (culturally, politically, or socially) without compromising the gospel?
3. Think about the freedoms you often use to justify your choices. Do those freedoms tend to build others up—or do they sometimes tear others down?
4. Paul's race analogy suggests a long, disciplined journey rather than a sprint. In what areas of your spiritual life do you need greater consistency and training?
5. Self-discipline, Paul says, produces more self-discipline. What small, practical step could you take this week that would help strengthen discipline in another area of your walk with Christ?



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The following page is meant to be used as a group activity if you'd find it beneficial

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR USING CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

This worksheet is designed to help you prayerfully reflect on how you use your freedom in Christ. Take time to answer each question honestly. Remember: the goal is not guilt but growth, so invite the Spirit to guide your responses.

Obstacle Question:

Will taking advantage of my freedom create an obstacle in someone else's ability to know and experience Christ?

Reflect: Think of a time when your words, actions, or choices may have made it harder for someone to see Jesus clearly. What could surrender have looked like in that moment?

Effort Question:

Does taking advantage of my freedom require me to adjust, make concessions, or put in extra effort for the sake of others?

Reflect: Where might God be asking you to step into someone else's shoes in your family, workplace, or community?

Helpful Question:

Will taking advantage of my freedom be helpful, encouraging, or good for those around me?

Reflect: Name one area where you could use your freedom not for yourself but to build someone else up this week.

Glory Question:

Will taking advantage of my freedom bring glory and honor to Christ?

Reflect: How do you personally discern what glorifies God? What practices help you stay aligned with Jesus' example?

Closing Prompt for Sharing:

Write down one area where you sense God calling you to surrender or redirect your freedom this week—and one way you want to practice self-discipline to support that change.