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# Church Evangelism

the why, how, & where of Clearcreek chapel outreach

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## Its Lifestyle (answers the “How”)

9:19-27

This evening we pick up our three-part series called Church Evangelism where we left off last week. You may recall last week we set out to answer the question “why are we to be involved in church evangelism”? Our answer was taken from 1Corinthians 11:1. Here, we found a command meant for the entire church: “be imitators of Paul as he is of Christ”. We worked through what it means to imitate both Paul and Christ by using the verse’s context. The conclusion had to do with Christian liberty. *Christians have liberty in morally neutral matters – they can partake or they can abstain. The motive behind this principle is the salvation of as many people as possible.*

Tonight’s message is written to answer the question how. How are we to use our liberty for the salvation of as many people as possible? This message will probe the issue of church contextualization. This concept certainly needs to be defined before we go too far in the message. It’s a delicate topic inviting much back and forth conversation. I don’t think here at the Chapel it will prompt heated debate. But I do enjoy discussion. And so after the message please formulate your thoughts and ideas over the essence of this message. And we will have a good discussion over church contextualization.

For now, here’s the definition I’ll be working off of. Using Timothy Keller’s words, “Sound, biblical contextualization is not giving people what they want to hear. Rather, it is giving people the Bible’s answers, which they may not want to hear, to questions about life that people in their particular time and place are asking, in language and forms they can comprehend and through appeals and arguments with force they can feel even if they reject them”.<sup>1</sup>

So, if we are to follow Paul in this missionary-style ministry, certainly he has been clear over his example. If he simply said, “imitate me” in missionary activity and did not provide a pattern, then how would we possibly be able to imitate him?

But in our passage for this evening, Paul’s clear teaching over contextualization will be provided. We will be studying 1Corinthians 9 to develop our patterns and rhythms as a church reaching out to the neighborhoods with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To this end, please turn in your Bibles to 9:19-27 and follow along as I read.

*For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 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 (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that*

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<sup>1</sup>Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 89.

*I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.*

Here in these verses, the apostle Paul describes an attitude that underlies his lifestyle. To get a sense of the context of these two paragraphs, we will need to get an overview of chapter nine.

His critics in Corinth said he was a fraud because he didn't even get paid for the ministry (9: 1-18) and that he vacillated (9:19-27). His interpretation on why he does ministry free of charge and why his behavior changes according to his context was vastly different than his critics. They wanted to expose him as a fraud and shape the church in Corinth to emulate their teaching. This deeply concerned Paul. Should they turn against their church planter (himself) and adopt another view of the Christian life dreadful results may ensue. They would be in danger of losing the gospel. And nothing good comes out of exchanging the authentic gospel for another gospel which is no gospel at all. Stakes could not be higher. So, he sets out to explain to the church both why he works for free and why he accommodates his behavior without compromising his belief.

The gospel freed Paul from equating nonethical behavior to the gospel itself. He was free in Christ to change his lifestyle to adapt to the lives of unbelievers without compromising his beliefs. The gospel shaped, steered and empowered him to be a servant of non-Christians. May the gospel tonight do the same for us. Developing our hearts and skills at reaching people redemptively where they live culturally will require attention to 1Corinthians 9: 19-23 and the Holy Spirit's aid. Let's pray to that end. <pray>

The premise tonight is this. ***Church evangelism has to do with lifestyle. This lifestyle is seen in two aspects – as a servant and as an athlete.***

First look with me at our church evangelism lifestyle seen *as a servant*.

## **As a servant**

**v19-23**

To see this, follow along as I read for us 9:19-23.

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 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 (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

(1 Corinthians 9:19-23 ESV)

The main thought of v19-23 is seen in Paul's use of repetition. 6x he uses the word "win" or "save" to refer to his desire to see "as many as possible" come to Christ for salvation.

## **Free**

**v19**

The first aspect of being this kind of servant can be seen in v.19. "I made myself a servant" tells us that for Paul being a servant of unbelievers for the sake of the gospel was no effort.

He freely did this. Likewise, there is to be no begrudging attitude with us. There is no internal restraint forcing us through guilt, shame or human expectations to pick up the towel and serve rebellious, hardened, unbelievers. No. Because of the gospel, it is our joy. It is our delight to be an instrument in the redeemer's hand.

### **Flexible**

**v20-22**

The second aspect of being a servant can be seen in vv.20-22. Paul lists a wide range of people to whom he voluntarily became a servant in order to reach a few. Religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized – whoever<sup>2</sup>. His point here is that he crossed socio-economic barriers and became like them without participating in disobedience in order to win them over to Christ.

### **Focuses on the goal**

**v22b-23**

Lastly, the aspect we see in vv.22b-23 relates to focus or perspective. His attention when living in a fallen world for the sake of Christ was fixed upon the goal. And what is the goal we see in these verses? It runs in two directions though not in tension with each other. We see the goal of his priorities and activities is to win by all means possible some unbelievers to Christ. Oh, to be so fueled and focused by this goal for the sake of the lost will radically impact our neighborhoods and utterly change the look of the Chapel. And all this for the multiplication of the manifestation of the glory of God!

Paul focuses his life not only on saving souls but notice v.23. He understands that to orient ones life around this goal is outright favorable for him. Paul sees no necessary tension between a self-denying passion for the sake of unbelievers' salvation and a radically self-interest passion for the sake of personal enjoyment in the blessings of God. The two passions unite; a passion for lost souls and a passion to be eternally happy in the blessings of the gospel. This is the focus Paul has that kept him involved in commissional living to the end of his life.

### **As an athlete**

**v24-27**

The second aspect in a lifestyle of church evangelism is seen in v24-27. The main thought of these verses as to do with self control. Here he shows the importance of the seriousness of a holy life. Follow along as I pick up reading the text where we left off – v24-27

*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. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

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<sup>2</sup> This sentence came from Eugene Peterson; The Message – New Testament in contemporary language.

## **Strenuous**

**v24-25**

To outline what it takes to be involved in church evangelism Paul highlights the importance of discipline. v24-25 tell the church that this flexible lifestyle is arduous, demanding and exhausting at times. It is nothing short of STRENUOUS. His only command found in the entire ninth chapter is in v.24; “*so run*” – He is telling them, and God is telling us, that there is no such thing as loitering in the Christian journey. There is no such category of coasting. The Christian life (particularly when we enter into other people’s culture on mission) is a laborious discipline to stay clear of idolatry and ultimate ruin.

## **Self-denying**

**v25**

Paul lists another feature to church evangelism. We can pick that out from v.25. “Self-control” and thoughts like it are interwoven throughout this paragraph. He tells the church that a self-denying lifestyle is non-optional for those who will make it to the end and so win the prize of eternal joy. As an athlete, denying certain fleeting enjoyments is part of the training schedule. Athletes understand that to win the prize they need to forfeit some good things in order to gain the better things. And so it is with us. To increase church evangelism we must understand that the greater joys to be experienced come to those who submit to a self-denying regimen. To stay pure in an impure surrounding takes a self-controlled lifestyle.

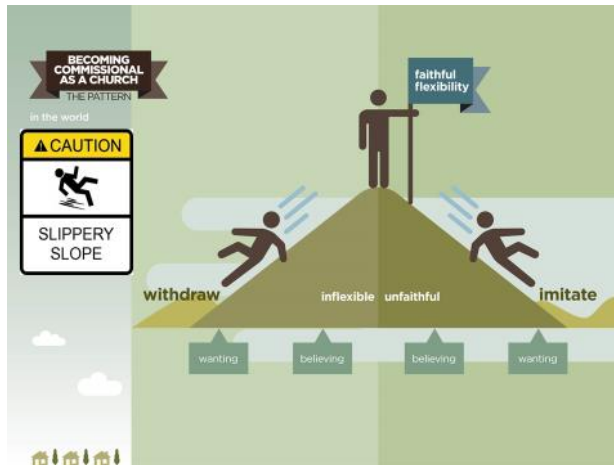
## **Sees the goal**

**v26-27**

Lastly, Paul lists another facet which reflects being an athlete. This is observed in vv.26-27. To maintain radical spiritual difference from the world when ministering in the world the church must have a discipline that is strenuous, self-deny and lastly sees the goal. Paul saw the prize for which he was stretching. He also saw it in the negative. V. 27 tells us that Paul saw himself as a candidate for losing eternal joy should he not be like this athlete. This is not to say that for Paul he thought that his eternal security was bound up in his undaunted self-determination. Paul had all the confidence in the Sovereign God who is faithful (cf. 1:8; 10:13). But one of the ways the Sovereign God perseveres people like Paul (and like you and me) is to make us feel real warnings. And we come across one of these staggering warnings in v.27. Paul believes God’s word in a form of warning and perseveres to the goal through athlete-like discipline.

So to summarize the teaching and apply its insights, we will attempt to capture the essence of the teaching in a picture. This model is taken from our Becoming Commisssional as a Church course. Some of you may be familiar with this model.

What I aim to do with it tonight is give you a visual so the teaching will be easier to remember. But also, I will walk us through it a bit in order to help tease out some of the implications to the teaching and apply it to our lives.



On the scene you should see the pattern we teach in our Becoming Commissional as a Church course. First notice the name. Faithful Flexibility. This phrase is shorthand for what we just saw in 1Corinthians 9:19ff. 1) Flexible = liberty in non-moral behavior 2) Faithful = holiness in all behavior. In other words, we are to accommodate our behavior without compromising our belief.

To explore what this may mean in our particular lives, we will break down the model by surfacing the principle of the passage. Then we will sniff out what this means for us in practice.

---To end the message, outlined below is a 13 min. of dialogical teaching with the crowd -----  
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The principle: We need to be less offended by outsiders' lifestyles (9:19) and we need to be offending less outsiders by our lifestyles (10:32).

1) Be less offended

- a. Traditional lifestyle = think the WHIO radio group (Limbaugh, Hannity)
- b. Trendy lifestyle = think the NPR radio group (Morning Edition, All things considered)

2) Be offending less

- a. To the traditional – needlessly partaking of stuff “jolting”
- b. To the trendy – needlessly abstaining from stuff “judging”