

Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | November 6, 2022

For our devotional studies this week, we'll learn from God and the Scriptures with our head, our hearts, and our hands.

Each week, you'll have an opportunity to learn (head), to engage how the Scripture passage intersects with your life (heart), and be prompted to take action (hands).

Our hope is that this devotional will help you love God, love people, and make disciples.

HEAD

Like last week with 1 Corinthians 8, we're going to dig into the context of 1 Corinthians 9 to understand a little more about what Paul is teaching in this passage. To do that, we'll look at a familiar teaching from Jesus and go back to last week's text to see how Paul's thoughts continued to unfold.

First, take a few moments to read Luke 10:35-37 and 1 Corinthians 9:1-23.

How would you summarize what Paul is teaching in 1 Corinthians 9:1-23? How does the story of the Good Samaritan illustrate what Paul is teaching in this 1 Corinthians passage?

Now read 1 Corinthians 8.

Remember that when the letter was written, there were no chapter or verse distinctions. This was one long letter, and the teachings relate to and, in many cases, build upon one another.

In chapter 8, Paul is addressing food sacrificed to idols, a specific problem among fellow believers. Still, his approach seems similar to Chapter 9 even though he's talking about taking the Gospel to those who don't follow Christ. Case in point, chapter 9 says, "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." Doesn't that sound similar to chapter 8 when he says, "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak"?

The command to love our neighbors as ourselves applies to those inside the church and those outside the church. And that love-in-action is hard work; it requires an incredible deal of self-sacrifice.



As you reflect, in what other ways does the ‘solution’ in Chapter 8 compare to Paul’s approach to ministry in Chapter 9? What are the things that Paul sacrifices to help bring people far from Jesus *to* Jesus?

What other examples of self-sacrifice for the sake of sharing the Gospel can you think of from the Bible or from history?

HEART

As you allow Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9 to sink into your heart, take some space to wrestle with how you see the people in your life who aren’t followers of Jesus. Take time to meet with God in the reality of how you see others, either positively or negatively.

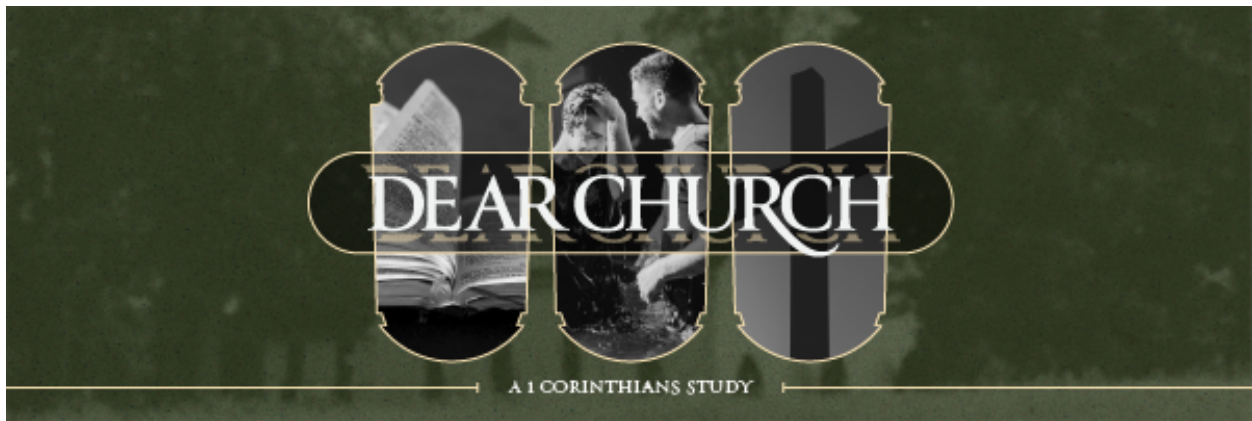
In Luke 10, Jesus asks the expert in the law who his neighbor is.

How do you think Paul would answer that question? How would you answer that question after reading 1 Corinthians 9 (especially verses 19-23)?

It seems Paul’s “questions behind the question” are these as he goes about his ministry to both believers and non-believers: *What is the most effective way I can share the Gospel? What’s keeping me from doing that?*

For example, he says,

- “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”
- “I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.”
- “...we put up with anything rather than hinder the Gospel of Christ.”



Have you ever asked yourself, “What’s the most effective way I can share the Gospel?” If so, how have you answered it? If not, what’s keeping you from asking it of yourself?

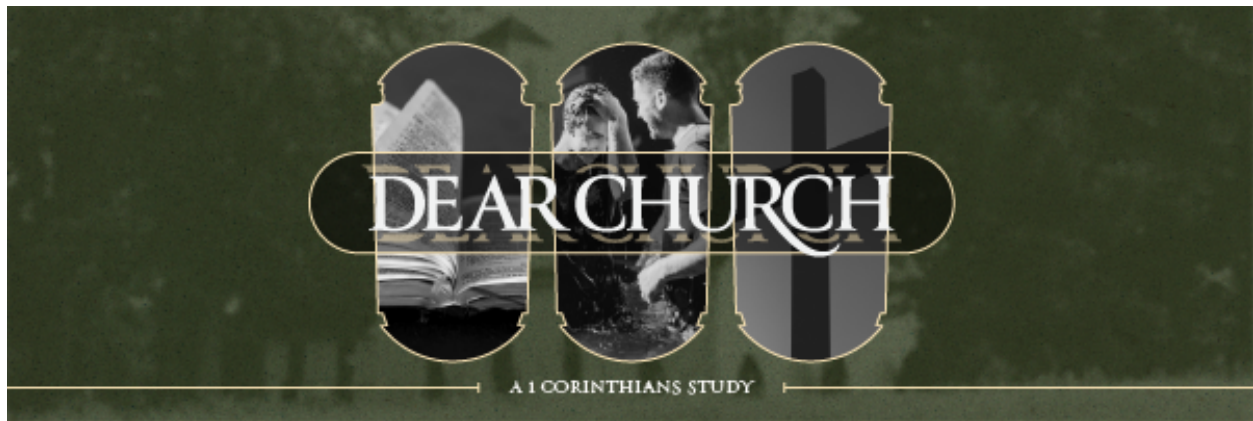
Take a few minutes to think about your answers and write a prayer response to God based on what you write.

HANDS

Paul was willing to do whatever he could for the sake of advancing the Gospel. When he says, “we put up with anything rather than hinder the Gospel of Christ,” it means he chose to believe the Gospel was more important than his own preferences, ideas, or even safety. He chose to be undeterred by situations and unoffended by people.

For many of us—and this seems to be what Paul is teaching against—advancing the Gospel often comes from our ability to be unoffendable. Author Brant Hansen in his book, which is titled *Unoffendable*, says this: “Jesus encountered one moral mess after another, and He was never taken aback by anyone’s morality. *Ever*. Choosing to be unoffendable out of love for others is ministry.”

As you begin thinking about how this applies to your own life, start by making a list of what offends you (i.e. how people dress, talk, or drive).



Now think about this question: Which of those offenses can you choose to overlook this week for the sake of winning others with the Gospel?

Last week's heart question was focused on our brothers and sisters in Christ. This week, answer the (almost) same question with a focus on those who are outside of Christ: **What right(s) do you need to lay down as soon as possible for the sake of winning people to Christ?**

What is an action step you can take this week to lay down your rights or choose to not be offended: at work, in your home, etc.?

Tell someone your action step and follow up on whether you did it. Share with that person what it was like, what kept you from doing it, and where you saw God in the midst of it all.