

God's mission and ours

A Bible study on 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 and 10:31–11:1

From reading the book of Acts and the letters of the apostle Paul, it couldn't be clearer that Paul has a unique and special task given to him directly by the risen Jesus: to bring the gospel of salvation to all Gentiles. But is this unique task limited to Paul or to specifically gifted teachers and preachers called by God to do the work of evangelism? Or are we all responsible in some way?

1. "I prefer to leave the work of evangelism to those who have specific gifts and callings. That's why we have missionaries, after all." How do you feel about this statement? Why?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–23.

2. Paul's lifestyle marks him out as an evangelist. What evangelistic characteristics of his behaviour do you notice in the passage?
3. What does Paul give as the reason for his behaviour in these verses?
4. Given Paul's motivation, what aspects of his behaviour are specific to him? What is recorded for the purposes of imitation by other Christians?
5. Think of at least two examples in your life where you demonstrate Paul's flexibility of behaviour, or where you could if you decided to.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1.

6. What does Paul say should be our *ultimate* motivation (10:31)? What does this mean?

7. How will your answer to question 6 affect your behaviour with others?
8. What prevents such behaviour changes from being insincere or fake?
9. Why does Paul refer back to himself in 10:33–11:1 instead of pointing only to Jesus?
10. What daily habit(s) might help you to obey 11:1?
11. Think back to question 1. How would you answer that question in light of the verses you've just examined?

Concluding prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for the example of Paul, who followed the example of Christ. We pray that we, too, would imitate Paul as he imitated Christ, and ask that we would be examples of godly motivation and godly behaviour. We pray especially that we would seek to be all things to all people in order not to create obstacles for the gospel by our behaviour, and so that some would indeed come to hear and see the gospel and the evidence for its truth. We ask that by doing this, others would come to know and love your son Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Amen.