



An Example of Leadership (1 Cor. 9:1-23)

There is an oft repeated phrase, “*Do as I say and not as I do.*” Those who utter this phrase (and really mean it) exhibit a lack of leadership ability and probably also lack character. A true leader will lead by example. A true leader will ask no more of another than he is willing to give himself. A true leader will act as he expects others to act.

In chapter 8, the apostle Paul wrote that Christians should be willing to give up their rights if they would cause another Christian to stumble. Paul does not expect Christians to give in to every person who complains when they don’t get their way, but he does expect Christians to do those things that will build unity in the church.



In the dilemma discussed in 1 Cor. 8, some in the church thought it wrong to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols while others did not. Paul tells the Corinthians that there is nothing wrong with the meat, but in verse 13 of 1 Cor. 8 he says, “*if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*” Paul not only expected the Corinthian Christians to give up their right to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols; he also showed that he has given up many of his own rights.

Some within the Corinthian church were challenging Paul’s authority. He writes in verse 3 using the legal terminology of a trial as he makes his defense (*apologia*) against their examination. As an apostle, an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord Paul did have authority. He had laboured tirelessly in Corinth. If anyone should listen to Paul it was the Corinthian Christians, yet some in the church were questioning Paul. In this chapter he provides an extraordinary example of leadership.

1. What does Paul call the Corinthian Christians in verses 1 and 2?

I. The Rights That Paul Gave Up

There are three rights outlined in verses 1-6 that belonged to Paul. **The first is the right of financial support.** In verse 4 Paul says that he has the right to eat and drink. What he is saying here is that he had the right to be supported physically by the Christians. They were obligated to provide for his financial and physical needs. He elaborates on this in verses 7-14. The right to financial compensation for preaching the gospel is clearly seen here.

Beginning in 1 Cor. 9:1 Paul asks 16 rhetorical questions.
Please list them below.



Six illustrations are used by Paul to prove that a Christian worker had the right to be paid for the work he did for the gospel. In verse 7, soldiers that fight in battles for their nation don't have to pay their own expenses. When soldiers are sent to fight, they aren't sent a bill for their plane fare, weapons, and so on. They are serving so those they serve provide for their needs. Also in verse 7, the person who plants a vineyard expects to eat from the fruit and if a person tends a flock he should be able to expect some of the milk. These examples in verse 7 are from human authority

In verse 9 Paul moves to Scriptural authority. The ox is not to be muzzled while he is treading out the grain (Deut. 24:4); in verse 10 those who plow, plow in hope. Those who thresh do so in hope of sharing in the crops. Finally, in verse 13 those who work in the temple are to be compensated by the part of the gifts that the people offered to the Lord (Numbers 18:8-20). Even the Lord said that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel (Matt. 10:9-10).

2. What is taught in 1 Cor. 9:11, 14 and how does this relate to verses 7, 9, 10, and 13?

3. What is taught in 1 Timothy 5:17-18?

Essential Paul says, "I worked with you. I taught you. I shared with you. I have the right to be cared for financially by you!" But, Paul gave up this right. **The second right that Paul gave up was the right to bring along a believing wife** (vs. 5).

The other apostles brought wives along, just like Peter, and the brothers of Jesus. Paul was not married (at least at this time) and so he does not exercise the right to bring a Christian wife on his missionary journeys.

The third right that Paul gives up is the right to earn a living without taking another job. This teaching is found in verse 6 and relates closely to the first right of financial compensation. Physical labor was despised by the Greeks. They had slaves for this kind of work. They spent their time amusing themselves in literature, sports, and leisure, and philosophy, but Paul worked as a tentmaker working with animal hides. He certainly had the right to earn his living by preaching and teaching alone, but he gave up that right and chose to work as a tentmaker.

II. The Reason Paul Gave Up His Rights

4. According to verses 19 and 22 why did Paul give up his rights?

Paul's greatest desire was to win the lost and preserve those who were already in Christ. Paul would give up any right, any comfort, and exert any effort to lead the lost to Christ and to strengthen the Corinthian Christians. Paul had given up the right to bring along a Christian wife, or even to have a wife. Without a wife and family he had greater freedom to travel and preach and would need less money.

5. According to verse 12 why did Paul give up the right of financial support?

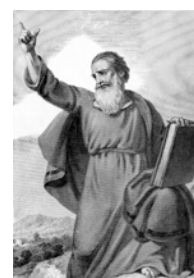


Paul knew that in some way he would be criticised or the church would be hindered if he took money from them. Therefore, Paul willingly and lovingly gave up his right for financial support. He was not asking for this right to be reinstated. In verse 15 he makes it clear that he is not asking, and does not desire their financial support.

6. What does 2 Cor. 11:7-9 say about financial support Paul did receive?

7. Describe what preaching the gospel meant to Paul? (vs. 16)

Paul says, “I must preach the gospel. I am compelled to do so. Even though I could demand to be compensated by you, I will never do it. I give up that right!” Most people hold no rights dearer than to be paid for their work and to have a family, yet Paul gave up those rights so that he might be his most effective in preaching the gospel and winning the lost. This truly should emphasise and demonstrate to the Corinthians that they should be willing to give up any right if it did anything to hinder the gospel.



In verses 17 and 18 the idea is that if Paul preached because of his own will he would could gladly claim wages, but he preached because God had specifically called him and selected him. He was compelled to preach and was under divine woe if he did not. His preaching then is a stewardship entrusted to him by God. The reward he receives is being able to offer the gospel free of charge instead of demanding his right to be paid. His real compensation is winning the lost as seen in verses 19-23.

Paul continues to show how he gives us his rights in verse 19. Though he was free from all men (they didn't pay him), he became a servant to all in order to win them to Christ. In verses 20-23 Paul now begins to list some of the groups to which he gave up his rights and thus became a slave.

8. List the four groups to which Paul gave up his rights, and so became like one of them. (vss. 20-22)

One would think that the Jews and those under the law in verse 20 would be the same group. The distinction is probably in those who were very law conscious and those who were not. There were those Jews who tried to keep the Law of Moses faithfully and others who were more concerned with the traditions. Paul tried as best he could, and when it did not violate his faith in Christ, to not bring offense to all those to which he preached.

9. If the Jews and those under the law refer to various groups of Jews, who would be identified in verse 21 as those outside the law?

To the weak, he became weak meaning that he gave up his rights if it would bring offense to another Christian. Paul did all that he could, accommodating culture and tradition, so long as it did not conflict with the teachings of Christ.

10. What was Paul's ultimate goal in accommodating others? (vs. 23)