

# JESUS DISPLAYED

### **Leader pages on pp. 150-153**

**THE POINT:**  
WE CAN BETTER SHARE  
JESUS WITH OTHERS  
WHEN WE STEP INTO  
THEIR SHOES.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-27

<sup>16</sup> For if I preach the gospel, I have no reason to boast, because I am compelled to preach — and woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

<sup>17</sup> For if I do this willingly, I have a reward, but if unwillingly, I am entrusted with a commission.

<sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? To preach the gospel and offer it free of charge and not make full use of my rights in the gospel.

<sup>19</sup> Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law — though I myself am not under the law — to win those under the law.

<sup>21</sup> To those who are without the law, like one without the law — though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ — to win those without the law.

<sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some.

<sup>23</sup> Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.

<sup>24</sup> Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize.

<sup>25</sup> Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown.

<sup>26</sup> So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air.

<sup>27</sup> Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

## KEYWORDS

**Boast (v. 16)**—To “boast” is to express exceptional pride in or glory in oneself.

**Slave (v. 19)**—Paul was not bound to any person, either personally or financially. Metaphorically, he had given up his personal freedoms for the good of everyone to hear the gospel.

**Law of Christ (v. 21)**—Abiding by the higher moral standards reflective of a genuine follower of Jesus.

**Imperishable crown (v. 25)**—A material prize was a perishable crown. In contrast, believers in Christ receive an imperishable [or incorruptible] crown.

# WHAT CAN BELIEVERS DO TO HELP OTHERS KNOW JESUS?

In Luke 19, Zaccheus heard that Jesus was coming through his town. Because he was of a small stature, he climbed a tree in order to get a good look and Jesus. His tactic worked! Jesus saw this despised tax collector and instead of judging him, invited Himself to Zacchaeus' house. He chose to have supper with a sinner which did not go well with the religious leaders. Unmoved by them, Jesus stepped into the life of a man who felt unworthy of the Master's attention and changed his life forever.

In a similar fashion, we should be aware of those around us and be willing to meet them where they are. Our mission should be to create an opportunity to share Christ's message of love and redemption. As we study this lesson today, we will get a glimpse of the Apostle Paul's strategy in reaching others with the gospel so that some may be saved. Prayerfully, we will learn to share Jesus with others by taking the time to understand their strains and struggles and serve with them.

## Spread the Gospel //

**1 Corinthians 9:16-18**

Paul said he had a "commission." I didn't fully understand what that word meant until the Lord led me to pastor in a military town. The community

I serve is the home of the U.S. Army Cyber Command. So, naturally, many church members and friends serve in our nation's military. I've learned that when one receives their commission, two things come with it: a job—a responsibility—and the authority to carry it out. The same thing is true for us as Christians.

We have a responsibility. Jesus has commissioned us to tell others about Him. He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). It's not a suggestion; it's a command, like one a general would give to a soldier.

Jesus has commissioned us. He has sent us to tell everybody we can about Him, what He did on the cross, and what He wants to do in their lives. That's why Paul said he was "compelled." He explained this compulsion more in 2 Corinthians 5:14. "For the love of Christ compels us, since we have reached this conclusion, that one died for all, and therefore all died."

The word "compelled" is a strong word that communicates force or pressure. It's not a word that leaves the option of doing it or not. No. Just as a private must follow his commanding officer's orders, we must also fulfill our responsibility to share Jesus and the good news of the gospel



## THE POINT:

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with our family, friends, neighbors—and even those outside our comfortable circle of acquaintances.

Being commissioned doesn't just mean we have a responsibility; it also means we have the authority to do what our Lord has told us to do. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18–20).

Matthew 28:18–20 is known as Jesus's "Great Commission." Here, Jesus tells us that we have the authority to do what He has commanded us. He said He's received all authority, and He sends us out with that authority. He said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." Isn't that encouraging?

I remember the first person I ever told about Jesus. His name was Rob, and he lived four houses down from mine. Even though I grew up in a Christian home and my dad was a pastor, I didn't come to know Jesus until I was eleven. I had just been a Christian for a while and had never shared the gospel with anybody when I realized my friend Rob didn't know Jesus. I was apprehensive about talking to him about his relationship with Jesus. So, I invited him to church, and he came several times. Then, I asked him to go on a weekend youth trip to Nashville with our church. We got up early one morning and made coffee in the hotel room. We thought we were so grown up!

Rob and I were on the balcony of that hotel room, drinking our coffee, when I felt "compelled," a sense that I should ask him if he had a personal relationship with Jesus—if he had ever been "saved." Rob said that He didn't know what that meant. I had the privilege of telling Rob that Jesus loved him so much that He died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day. I explained that if he would admit he was a sinner, repent of his sin, and surrender his life to Jesus, Jesus would forgive him and come into his heart and life. There, on the balcony of that Nashville hotel, my neighbor Rob gave his life to Jesus and was saved!

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF US SHARING JESUS WITH OTHERS?

### Be Flexible in Your Witness //

1 Corinthians 9:19–23

I remember seeing a church wearing shirts that had the words, 'Whatever it takes' printed on them. Paul is a prime example of a Christian who was willing to do whatever it took to show and share



### DIGGING DEEPER

#### GRECIAN GAMES

In 1 Corinthian 9:27, the Apostle Paul used the imagery of the Grecian games as both an athlete and a herald of the contest. Each participant had to present themselves ten months before the event to prepare through rigorous training as well as to eat a specific diet of dried figs, nuts, soft cheese, and bread. Additionally, the competitors also had to swear an oath of fair play and acceptable behavior.<sup>28</sup> This was Paul's mindset in saying, "I discipline my body and bring it under strict control." Furthermore, the games had a herald who whose business it was to proclaim the conditions of the games, and display the prizes, to awaken the emulation and resolution of those who were to contend in them.<sup>29</sup> This is why Paul said, "so that after preaching" God's Word to others, he would "not be disqualified"

**How will you exercise discipline to run your race as a follower of Christ?**

Jesus with others—even those from a different country, culture, or creed.

He even lists some examples of how he was willing to do whatever it took to win people to Christ. He made himself a slave to win those who were slaves. Paul would serve others as much as he needed to serve. He became like a Jew to win Jews. He put himself under the law to win those under the law by submitting to the discipline of the synagogue to be able to share the gospel there. Paul became like those without the law to win those without the law and would stand up for the Gentiles's freedom from circumcision and other Jewish practices. He became weak to win the weak; not claiming his rights, or exposing himself to danger, if it meant limiting his opportunity to reach people for Christ. That's undoubtedly a whatever it takes attitude!

I've always been amazed at people who can fit in with whatever group or situation they find themselves in. I have a friend who is just as comfortable hanging out with farmers in worn-out jeans and work boots as he is with national politicians and business leaders in custom suits and expensive dress shoes. He can fit in at a fancy dinner party just as easily as serving lunch at an inner-city soup kitchen. Even though the situation may be different, he doesn't change.

That's the way it was with Paul. Paul was the same person with the same message, even if he modified his methods depending on his audience. The reason is that Jesus is always the same, and Paul wanted them to come to know his Savior. Does that mean he always used the same approach? No. He says that the approach changed to be most effective depending on who he was seeking to win to Jesus. But even though the method changed, the message didn't.

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE SO WE CAN SHARE CHRIST?

The greatest need of people doesn't change either. Every person on the planet has this in common with every other person: We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Paul said that we've all sinned and come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23) and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).



## Live the Life //

### 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

We've seen how we can display Jesus to those around us. But what does it take to win others to Jesus who are outside your comfort zone? Paul said it takes two things. First, it takes self-denial. That can be a challenge for many. Most people don't want to deny themselves because they're their favorite person. So, to illustrate this necessity, Paul painted a vivid picture of this self-denial using sports imagery. He used the runner and the boxer to show the self-denial it takes to reach people with the gospel.

Both running and boxing require self-denial for the athlete to win the prize. The runner must be willing to experience the discomfort in running long races or the pain of exertion needed for short ones, and the boxer must be willing to experience the pain of getting punched—a lot. You won't be a successful runner if you aren't willing to endure that pain, and you can't be a successful boxer if you're afraid of being hit.

Emil Zátopek, known as the "Czech Locomotive," exemplified this self-denial, winning three gold medals at the 1952 Olympics with his unorthodox, pain-enduring running style.<sup>30</sup>

Marvin Hagler, dubbed "Marvelous," was celebrated for his middleweight reign from 1980-1987. He was known for absorbing immense punishment while maintaining offensive pressure, epitomizing how enduring pain could be transformed into a strategic advantage.<sup>31</sup>

## THE POINT: WE CAN BETTER SHARE JESUS WITH OTHERS WHEN WE STEP INTO THEIR SHOES.

Likewise, if you're unwilling to endure the pain and discomfort of stepping outside your comfort zone to share the gospel with those beyond your immediate context and culture, you won't be successful in reaching others for Him. If you're not willing to endure the hits and rejection that can sometimes come when telling others about Jesus, you won't be effective in your mission. It may hurt sometimes, but if us doing without means others getting to live with Christ forever, it's worth it.

Sharing Jesus with others also requires self-discipline. We see this again in the two examples of running and boxing. Perhaps you've seen the famous Rocky movies. It doesn't matter which one, because in each film, there is a scene where Rocky Balboa is preparing for his boxing match by running, biking, lifting weights, shadow boxing, hitting the speed bag, flipping tires, watching his diet, taking ice baths, etc. The boxer was disciplining his body so he could win the prize.

That's the sort of discipline Paul is referring to here. We must deny ourselves and discipline our hearts and minds to step out of our comfort zones and share Jesus with others.

### HOW DO SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-DENIAL HELP DEVELOP BELIEVERS AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST?

#### DID YOU KNOW?

With the changes in many people toward relativism, it is important to change our methods to meet with this new mindset, post-modernism. If truth is the only sure foundation, Jonathan Morrow called for believers "to press through these slogans and sound bites with clear thinking."<sup>32</sup> He listed questions to question them:

- There is no truth.  
(*Is that a true statement?*)
- We can't know truth.  
(*Is that a truth you know?*)
- All truth is relative.  
(*Is that truth claim also relative?*)
- You have your truth and I have my truth  
(*Is this true for both of us?*)

Christians need to ask these types of questions to those who say they want to know the truth but have bought into the post-modern mindset.

**Biblical Truth:** "Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

**What answers are you prepared to give for your faith in Christ?**

## LIVE IT

### How will you overcome any obstacles to share Christ this week?

We have been given the greatest responsibility in the world: sharing Jesus with those who need Him. With that responsibility comes the authority—the power and the strength—to accomplish our mission. Christ followers are called to do more than just receive Christ for ourselves, we are charged to share that message with others. So, how can we get past any fear we may have to share Jesus with others?

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- **Pray.** If you're afraid, ask Jesus to take away your fear so that you can tell others about Him. Let the power of the Holy Spirit be your strength and support.
- **Learn.** One way to overcome the fear of witnessing is to learn how to do so effectively. Ask someone who is consistent and confident to guide you how to share the gospel with others.
- **Share.** When you see an opportunity, take the step and share the life-changing truth of the gospel. Discipline your heart and mind to look for and respond to those "divine opportunities" to share Jesus with others.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. BORN FOR ADVERSITY // PROVERBS 17:17

Proverbs 17:17 states that a "brother is born for adversity." This means that someone who truly cares about another, whether a relative or not, will bond closer together rather than separate when life gets challenging. This is so because true love binds people into one unit to the extent that they can feel each other's joys and pains. When one is excited, the other is excited; when one is in pain, the other is in pain. These are the types of relationships God desires that we experience so that we can exemplify His love to the world. God's love is unconditional and unfailing. To display God's kind of love, we, the Church, must be willing to unite as one.

**"Love never fails; adversity only strengthens it"**  
(1 Cor. 13:8).

## 2. JESUS WEPT // JOHN 11:35

While the verse "Jesus wept" is the shortest verse of the Bible, it carries significant weight. This Scripture passage exemplifies compassion and empathy for the suffering of others, particularly involving the death of a loved one. This verse reveals the heart of Jesus and that, though the Son of God, He understands and feels human sorrows. Jesus did not weep because of hopelessness; He wept because of the great pain His friend's death had caused all those who loved Him. To love and be loved is the greatest experience humanity can have, and while much joy comes along with it, grief comes too, as no one is perfect or lives forever. However, Jesus is the reliable constant who will comfort us through it all.

**Take comfort in knowing that Jesus cares deeply for you.**

## 3. WHAT COMFORTS YOU? // MATTHEW 7:12

When presented with the challenges of another, how to comfort them is not always clear. The key to empathizing is imagining oneself in their situation. What would provide comfort, what would encourage, what would bring hope and

calm into the situation if it were being experienced personally? Matthew 7:12 admonishes the believer "to do unto others as you would have them do unto you" to help us realize that we all have like desires and needs, and if we can accurately assess what would work best for ourselves in a particular situation, it will probably serve someone else just as appropriately. Relating to the feelings of others helps us to best show and share the love of Christ.

**The love of Christ trains our hearts in empathy.**

## 4. SHARE CHRIST THROUGH SERVING // MATTHEW 9:36-38

Jesus's life lived on earth left a legacy of service. He came to earth for the sole purpose of service. All that He did was for someone else's benefit. He was never self-serving, seeking to build His own fiefdom, but others-minded at all times. Even when nurturing Himself, He did it to position Himself to better serve us. He oftentimes hid Himself in prayer to be strengthened by the Father, to gain the strength and direction to lead lovingly. In doing so, Jesus was always equipped to meet the needs of others. He gave His whole life for us so that we could once again experience what true living was like. He was selfless, sowed Himself into others, and now, as a result, harvested multitudes more who follow His footsteps.

**Our shared life's service draws others to Christ.**

## 5. SHARE CHRIST THROUGH OBEDIENCE // JOHN 5:19

Our greatest witness is our lifestyle. People are moved more by what is actually being lived out than by what they hear preached to them. This is why Jesus not only taught but demonstrated what He taught. He sent seventy-two out (Luke 10:1-23) to practice what they had been taught, to build relationships and connections throughout the community. Evangelism, therefore, serves a twofold purpose: to draw souls to Christ so that they too can one day do the same.

**We share Christ with the world by living in obedience to His Word.**