

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 9. 1 Corinthians 9. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to 1 Corinthians 9.

INTRODUCTION: EVANGECUBE

My second job as a teenager was at a Christian bookstore.

- I've told you about my first job...
- which was my worst job...
- at McDonalds
- cleaning out the ball pit...
- where I pulled out a diaper...
- "I'm loving it!"

But my second job was at a Christian bookstore. Not as bad. Definitely weird though!

And one of the things that the Christian bookstore sold were kitschy little items to help Christians out in sharing their faith.

And maybe one of the strangest was this little guy: the EvangeCube.

- It's about making sharing your faith more simple...
- cause nothing says *simple* like a Rubix cube!

Now, the doctrine in the EvangeCube is solid.

1. Man in sin separated from God
2. Christ on the Cross
3. The tomb...but don't worry, you know what comes next
4. The Resurrection! Yeah, Easter
5. Now the cross is a bridge
6. To God, and away from hell

So, I have no quarrels over their theology...

The question I do have is:

- how does one get to the point
- where they whip the EvangeCube out
- and start sharing about Jesus?

Are you, like, at the mall...you strike up a conversation with a guy,

- *"Hey...are you interested in going to heaven?"*
- *"Well, you know,*
 - *I'm here to get some pleated Dockers...*
 - *but now that you mention it...*
 - *I am interested."*
- *"Well, this is providential..."*
 - *because I just happen to have my EvangeCube."*

And then you just take some stranger through the Jesus Rubix cube in Park Meadows. It's just kinda strange.

TRANSITION

Man, sharing our faith...evangelism...it's hard! It can feel daunting.

And what happens, more often than not,

- is we try to make it gimmicky...
- or we leave it to people like me, pastors...
- or worst of all, we just give up on it altogether.

But today Paul is going to give us another push for how we love others:

- last week it was about sacrificing our rights for others.
- The week before it was about not dividing over non-essentials.
- But today he talks about sharing our faith.

So, let's see what Paul has for us, and maybe we can learn something here. We'll pick up right where we left off last week in verse 19:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19

[19] For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

So, here is where Paul begins to give his reasoning behind

- why he's not willing to get sucked into divisive secondary arguments,
- and why he is willing to lay down all his rights for the sake of the Gospel.
- He says he does it all that I might win more of them.

Now, that word, *win*, is found 5 times in these first five verses, and it leads us into the theme of this whole section. Evangelism, or winning people to Christ.

Verse 20.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:20

[20] 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.

EXPLAIN: JEWS

So, Paul starts with the **Jews** and **those under the law**. And I'll throw them together, ok?

- Likely, Paul is referring to ethnic Jews first,
- and then **those under the law**
 - could be Gentiles who came under the law,
 - essentially converting to Judaism,
 - even though they weren't ethnically Jewish.ⁱ

But for our purposes today, let's group them together.

Now, it's also confusing, because wasn't Paul Jewish?

- Yes, he was from the tribe of Benjamin.
- In fact, he was a Pharisee, an elite Jew!
- He was ethnically Hebrew.

So, when he says **I became as a Jew**, what is he referring to?

Well, I think he's referring to the Old Testament ceremonial laws

- of washings,
- and dietary restrictions,
- and festivals,
- and these types of religious practices.

And Paul makes it very clear in other New Testament writings that none of those ceremonial laws had any bearing on him as a Jew anymore,

- because while he was still an ethnic Jew...
- more so, he knew that in Christ
- there is neither Jew nor Greek.
- He was free from those laws.

BUT now he's saying that,

- if it would open up doors to his Jewish friends,
- he would do it.
- He'd partake in those laws,
- even though he didn't have to.
- He wanted to win them over to the Gospel!

Listen to me here:

- he would sacrifice his freedom,
- rather than lose a relationship
- where he might witness for Jesus.

Now, was that fun? No way! No more bacon!

But to win the Jews... he'd do it. It was a sacrifice.

Now on to the second group in verse 21.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:21

[21] 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.

EXPLAIN: GENTILES

This is pointing to non-Jews, or Gentiles. And this can be applied to most people in our world. Those who are secular, or un-religious, or atheistic, or whatever.

And the Gentiles in Corinth had their own set of moral standards.

- So, when Paul said **I became as one outside the law,**
- he doesn't mean that he jumps onboard
- with everything that is Corinthian...
- that is, hedonism,
- Porstitution...
- He didn't become a pagan sinner.

But hear me,

- **he valued his friendship and potential witness to those Gentiles**
- **more than he did in correcting their behavior**
- **or removing them from his life**
- **just because they had very different values than he did.**

And then the third group in verse 22:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:22

[22] 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.

EXPLAIN: THE WEAK

We don't know exactly who Paul is referring to when he talks about the weak,

- but I think it's likely those who are very new to their faith,
- or those who have some incomplete,
- or even problematic theology.

And I don't think that he's saying they AREN'T saved...

- but that they ARE saved,
- AND they are weak,
- thus, we need to gently bear with them,
- so as not to abandon them,
- or even worse, cause them to fall away.

APPLICATION: SECTARIANISM

Now, there are really two equal and opposite errors that Christians make when dealing with people.

SLIDE SECTARIANISM AND SYNCRETISM.

Let's deal with SECTARIANISM. What often happens in Christianity is

- we want to protect ourselves from the world.
- We want to protect our families from the world.
- We don't want to be negatively affected...
- or catch whatever sin is out there.

And so, we often err into SECTARIANISM.

- We separate.
- We segment.
- We run far from the world
 - and we shun everyone out there.

In the word sectarianism, is the word 'sect'. We become a sect AWAY from the world.

But, Paul doesn't do that. He's like:

- *"Jews,*
- *Gentiles,*
- *even weak Christians...*
- *I ain't scarred!*
- *I'm in it to win."*

APPLICATION: SYNCRETISM

But the other extreme, is what we call SYNCRETISM...this is where

- We blur the lines so much between what the Bible says,
- and what our world says,
- that we are indistinguishable.
- We sync them up.

And Fathom, this one is my greater fear for most of us.

- Because in trying to be liked,
- or relevant,
- or not some weird Christian...
- we often behave just like the world around us.

And Paul would unequivocally say NO to this, too!

It's not,

- *"to the drunks, I became a drunk."*
 - No!
- *"To the swingers, I became a swinger."*
 - Are you kidding me?

- We don't have Christian drunks.
- We don't have Christian swingers.

- We don't have Christian Country Music.

There are just some things we just cannot tolerate.

- Right?
- We outright reject them.
- They are incongruent with our faith.

TRANSITION

Paul doesn't err to either side: SECTARIANISM nor SYNCRETISM.

BLANK SLIDE.

Paul says,

- *"I tried to figure out how to articulate Jesus*
- *in as many ways as I possibly can*
- *to as many different types of people as I possibly can."*

Verse 23:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:23

[23] I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

This is our mission, church.

- We do it all for the sake of the gospel.
- We become all things to all people that we might win some.

It's my hope for Fathom that we wouldn't fall to either side.

- That we wouldn't fall to some liberal syncretism,
- nor this conservative separatism.

But that we would be on mission...

- sent out from here
- into our families,
- and neighborhoods,
- and workplaces,
- and schools.
- Everywhere!
- For the sake of the gospel.
- To win as many as possible!

Now, Paul illustrates HOW we are to do this in verses 24 through the end of the chapter.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

[24] 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. [25] Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. [27] But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

EXPLAIN: RACE

So, Paul uses a very easy-to-understand and culturally relevant illustration here for how we are to win as many people to Christ as possible. He says, *“Run!”*

He’s saying,

- *“you want to win as many people as possible?”*
- *It’s a race.*
- So, **SLIDE RUN TO WIN!**”

And this would have made a ton of sense to the Corinthians

- because of what were known as the Isthmian games,
- which were second only to the Olympics in the ancient world.
- They happened every second year,
- just outside of the city of Corinth,
- and running was the most popular event.ⁱⁱ

So, Paul is exhorting the Christians of Corinth to join him in **becoming all things to all people in order that they might win some.**

And the way he illustrates how they are to do that is by likening it to the Olympics! The games! RUN TO WIN! **BLANK SLIDE.**

You see, **the Christian life like a race.** This metaphor is all over the Bible.

- But the crux of Paul’s argument in our text today
- is that simply entering a race and running...
- does not automatically make you a winner.

Sure, you may be a Christian...

- but Christians must NOT ONLY join the race,
- Christians ALSO must put forth every effort to finish it well!

You've gotta RUN TO WIN!

- You can't just saunter around the track
- and expect some kind of trophy for participation.

This isn't some sort of...

- everyone gets a participation ribbon...
- and we're all winners...
- and your feelings are more important than winning...
- sort of nonsense.

No, you RUN TO WIN.

- You run with self-control.
- You discipline yourself.
- You run for the prize.
- You do not run aimlessly.

TRANSITION

But all too often this is how we treat evangelism—sharing our faith.

- We just kind coast at it.
- Sure, we'd like to share our faith...but it's tough!

So, we may be in the race,

- but we don't run with purpose,
- or vigor, or a plan, or a strategy.

We just kinda jog around, hoping things work out.

TRANSITION

But, Paul's words are instructional for us:

- We are to become all things to all people so that we might win some!
- And we can't just hope to coast into a win...
 - we gotta run,
 - we gotta train...
 - you gotta want it!

In light of that, I want to give us two crazy-applicable steps

- for how to run...
- for how to UP your evangelism game...
- for how to begin to become all things to all people, that by all means you might save some.

APPLICATION #1: PRAY

The first is this: we got everyone at Fathom Church an EvangeCube!

- No...just kidding.
- But can you imagine how awesome that would be if we did.
- You go to the pool and say,
 - *"You think it's hot out here?"*

Now, I mock...ok...and far be it from me to say that the Lord can't use the EvangeCube...but for most of us, I want to get really applicable.

So, two steps. The first thing I want to call us to, is to **SLIDE PRAY**.

- Actually, I want you to get out a piece of paper, or notebook,
- right now...ok?
- Or even open the notes app in your phone.
- And I want you to write down the name of one person.
- Just one person who you know
- who does not know Jesus.

How many people do we want to come to know Christ? Well, everyone, but I don't want to get us all riled up with some emotional fervor... "We're going to save all of Littleton!"

Maybe. Again, that'd be incredible!

- But Paul said:
- **I became all things to all people that I might save some.**
- So, I pose to you and I: **what about one more?**
- One more person in the kingdom.
- One more life changed by the Gospel.
- One more family affected.
- One more.

And I want you to commit to praying for your 'one more' every single day for the next two weeks. Pray for God to do something in their life to draw them to himself.

Who is that one more for you? I actually have three, ok?

- I have three who I have committed to pray for every single day.
- For God to just move in power and to save them.

So, PRAY for one more.

APPLICATION #2: PROCLAIM

But then the second thing we can do to run to win, is to

SLIDE PROCLAIM. Pray and proclaim!

- So, yes and amen to praying for your one more,
- but then I want you to up your ante,
- and pray for God to provide YOU
- with an opportunity to proclaim...
- to talk about the hope you have in Christ.

PRAY & PROCLAIM. **BLANK SLIDE.**

So, I pray every single day for my three, but then additionally, I pray for one of my neighbors.

- There are 14 houses on my block,
- and I pray each day for a different family.

And, yes,

- I pray for blessings for them
- and for God to move in their lives...
- but I also pray for God to give me opportunities
- to talk to them about Christ.

And sometimes

- God gives me opportunities,
- and I run hard and take them.

While other times

- I chicken out
- and miss opportunities,
- but I keep praying.

It happened again this week!

- While talking to one of my neighbors outside
 - about summer
 - and the heat
 - and CoronaVirus
 - and all that,
- all of a sudden he just got serious,
- and we had a spiritual conversation.

And I didn't pull out my EvangeCube...but we chatted.

- And I don't know what God will do...
- but what if he is one more?

ILLUSTRATION: WEAK PRAYERS

I've asked before, **but what if God said yes to every single prayer you prayed last week...would anything really have been different?**

I mean, we pray such weak prayers.

- You're at your d-group...
- about to have a meal together...
- and someone asks you to pray for the food...
- and instantaneously you think,
 - "Oh crap...let me think of something awesome."
 - Which, by the way: that's the real prayer!

The fake prayer starts when you say,

- “Dear God, thank you for this food
- and the hands that prepared it
- may it nourish our bodies. Amen.”

Come on...do you have to pray for food to nourish your body?

- As if it would turn to poison if you don't pray for it.
- “Spit that out!
- Spit it out.
- We haven't blessed it yet.
- What, are you crazy?”

No! You don't pray at the pool, “Lord, let the water be wet.”

We pray such weak prayers.

I want you to commit to this, church.

- Praying every day for one more,
- and also for God to give YOU an opportunity to proclaim.

CONCLUSION

Here's my main point this morning: **SLIDE** WHEN JESUS IS **EVERYTHING TO YOU, YOU WILL STOP AT NOTHING FOR OTHERS.**

- You just never know, church.
- You never know what might happen
- when you pray and proclaim.

I mean, think back to your own life with Jesus.

I came to know Jesus

- because a 19-year-old construction worker named Jared
- decided to become all things to me,
 - a 16-year-old punk.
- And he hung out with me.
- And he taught me to drive a stick shift.
- And we went camping together.
- And he demonstrated who Jesus was in his life,
- and even opened his mouth,
- and declared who Jesus was with his words...
- to me.
- And I gave my life to Christ because of Jared.
- I was his one more.

Can you imagine if you were a Jared to someone in your life?

This is our mission, church! One more...and then what? One more!

Let's pray together.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

ⁱ Garland, David. *1 Corinthians*.

ⁱⁱ Fee, Gordon. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*.