

Turn to 1 Corinthians 9

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24

So Paul is describing the Christian being competitive

Not competitive against someone else

But competitive against himself

Or herself

No participation trophies

In Paul's analogy

This race matters

This race requires maximum effort

"All the runners run, but only one gets the prize"

The New Living Translation says "Run to win!"

That's what I'm talking about

I'm very competitive

I always say,

"It doesn't matter if you win or lose"

"It only matters if I win or lose."

I'm very competitive

And Paul's saying

In this one aspect of the Christian life

We'll see what that is

In just a second

In this one aspect of the Christian life

Be competitive

Not against anyone else

But reach your utmost potential

Jesus said

When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required. – Luke 12:48b

In honor of the Olympics

Paul continues

Read 1 Corinthians 9:25

Tom Brady just retired from the NFL

It's Super Bowl Sunday

And in honor of his retirement

As a Colts fan, I think this is the first time I've ever quoted Tom Brady

Tom Brady won 7 Super Bowls

So he has 7 super bowl champion rings

He was asked once

Which was his favorite ring

"You wanna know which ring is my favorite? The next one." -Tom Brady

Whoever wins the game tonight

Will be very happy and excited

For a day or so

Maybe a couple weeks

And then they'll be focused on next year

Paul says the race I'm describing

Has a longer shelf life

Therefore

Because this is a long-term deal

Therefore

Read 1 Corinthians 9:26-27

Notice the word slave

That's key in this passage

It's a clue of what race Paul is describing

He says I go against my feelings

I go against my emotions or natural desires

I make my body my slave

So that I can run this race

So that I can win

So what race is he talking about?

And what does being a “slave” have to do with it?

Look up at verse 19

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19

I make my body a slave

I go against my feelings

I go against my emotions or natural desires

I make my body my slave

So that I can run this race

So that I can win

Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-22

“By all possible means”

Paul says I’ll do anything but sin

To win someone to Christ

I’ll do anything but disobey God

To win someone to God

Read 1 Corinthians 9:23

I don’t love that translation

I think the New American Standard is a little closer to the original

I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. – 1 Corinthians 9:23 (NASB)

Today, we might say “shareholder”

Let me say it this way

When you become a “fellow partaker” in the Gospel

You move off of the sidelines

And into the game

“Run to win”, friends

Because there’s far more on the line

In that contest

Than there ever will be tonight

2 Corinthians 5:11a - Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.

You’re life should be about persuading others

So speak boldly

Love and invite and pray

That God will persuade others through you

OK, so last week

I tried something new

I’ve preached hundreds and hundreds of sermons

I don’t think I’ve ever tried this

But I liked it

So I’m gonna try it again

I put the outline along the bottom of the screen

Kinda fancy

So I'm going to try that again

And just to make it memorable

They all start with S

Because I couldn't help myself

We've covered the Scripture

The Bible implores us to persuade others

To run to win in trying to be a light to others

But now let's look at the Statistics

Do you see this graph?

What do you think it represents?

The dark blue section

78%

Represents the number of non-Christians who would be open to talking with their Christian friend about their faith

Only 22% would feel at all uncomfortable

About 4 to 1 ratio

But according to Lifeway research who conducted the study

Even those numbers get better if one or more of these things is true:

“I saw them treat others better because of their faith.”

“I saw them caring for people’s needs because of their faith.”

“I saw them be happier because of their faith.”

“I saw them standing up against injustice because of their faith.”

“I saw them use their faith to solve problems in our community.”

“I saw them use their faith to help them solve their personal problems.”

“I saw multiple races/ethnicities working together in a church.”

It’s 4 to 1 without this

But all of those make it better

What about this?

87% of non-church going Americans have at least one Christian friend

Almost no one in America doesn’t have at least one Christian friend

And yet the majority

The large majority

Have never had a Christian friend tell them how to become a Christian (71%)

A large majority have never had

A Christian friend tell them the benefits of being a Christian (65%)

A large majority have never had

A Christian friend tell them the benefits of participating in a local church (67%)

Almost all non-Christian Americans have at least one Christian friend

And yet 40% of them

4 in 10

Have never had even one of their Christian friends

Tell them about *any* of those

I want you to picture that

I mean, we don't want to judge people

Or yell at people like some street preacher

But we believe that everyone lives forever somewhere

So 4 out of 10 folks

Who don't attend church

Who don't have a relationship with Jesus

Have one or more Christian friends

Who are following Jesus

Jesus

The One who told us to make disciples

They have never had *ANY* of their Christian friends

Who are going to spend eternity with God in Heaven

Tell them *ANY* of it

Almost half!

And yet, they're going to stand before God one day

Waiting to hear *their* eternal destiny

Having never been told about any of this

By any of their Christian friends

Our lives simply do not match our convictions

We must do better

We must *be* better

Our world is getting dark {Show Matthew 5:14-15 - You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.}

Everyone in the house needs more light

And we're the light of the world

The problem is

We're squeamish

We don't want to be *that guy*

Right?

You know *that guy*

And you don't want to *be* that guy

SKIT {BLANK SCREEN}

Listen to me:

You have two choices {Show "Square" & lines}

And they're big choices

When it comes to you being light

You can be Timid

Or you can be Bold

That's the first choice

Timid or bold

And you can be Humble

Or you can be Proud

That's the second

And it makes all the difference

How you choose

If you're timid

Even if you're humble about it

You're not going to shine very brightly

You're probably worried about upsetting people

And that's good

To a point

And you probably won't

But your fear will probably keep you from being very effective

If this is you

Timid and humble

May I remind you of Paul's words to Timothy:

2 Timothy 1:6-7 (NLT) - This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

You're not timid because of God's Spirit

So fan that into flame

Pray like crazy

If this is you

Pray like crazy

And ask Him to stir up that power that's already inside you

It'll make you bold

It'll make your heart break for those without Him

And ask Him to stir up that self-discipline

Some translations say “sound mind” that’s already inside you

So you can think clearly

To give the reasons for the hope that you have

That’s a powerful verse – one of my favorites

That applies to lots of things

But look what he says

In the very next statement

So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. – 2 Timothy 1:8a (NLT)

The application of verses 5 & 6

For Timothy

And for a lot of us

Is in speaking boldly about Jesus

“Never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord”

And if you’re feeling timid

Remember, that didn’t come from God

He gave you boldness

And love

And a sound mind

Humble and timid doesn’t work

Proud and timid works worse

So let's not even talk about that

Let's talk about proud and bold

Because that gets attention

But too often

Proud and bold

Reminds us of the church lady

She was proud and bold

If this is you

You approach the Gospel with all the tenderness

Of a hand grenade

You lob it over the wall

{BOOM}

But you did your part

You told 'em

It's like the old hymn

"Take your shrapnel to the Lord and leave it there"

If this is you

May I remind you of Titus 3:5?

Titus 3:5a - He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.

You are not a good person

Telling a bad person how to be like you

You are an orphan

Who was hungry and cold on the street

And you found a loving father

Who takes in scared, lonely kids

And you're just telling the other kids in the alley

About this great house you live in now

You were saved

Not because of righteous things you've done

You were saved

Because of His mercy

And His goodness

And His forgiveness

Timid doesn't work

But proud and bold doesn't work either

That leaves us with what we're striving for

Humble & bold

Humble

Because you know you are not any better

Than anybody else

And you may even be worse

Than the person you're talking to
And Bold
Because you love your friends
And you know they're going to spend forever somewhere
And you can't stand the idea
Of them standing before God
Not knowing what you know

And that leads us to success

We should be pray for success
In being a light
We should be pray for success
In persuading others
We should strive and run and compete for success
Because eternity matters
And everyone we know
Is going to spend forever somewhere

I want to end with these words from the Apostle Peter

1 Peter 3:15 - But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

There's 4 parts to this verse
Let me do it in reverse order

1. Have these conversations we're describing with gentleness and respect

Don't be a jerk

Don't be tacky

Don't be arrogant or rude

Be gentle

Show respect

2. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

That means you have to live with hope

If hope comes natural to you

Let your light shine

Show up in tough spots

Encourage

Uplift

Offer to pray for people

Offer them a smile and a hug

You know who you are

We need you ... to shine!

If hope is not natural to you

Remember it can be super-natural

So pray for it

I mean it

Pray for more hope in your life

Everyday

And when people see Eeyore being less grumpy

They're going to ask you about it

And you can tell them about Jesus

If you're going to have a supernatural hope

3. You need to revere Christ as Lord

Develop and nurture

A genuine

Heartfelt faith

This generation can smell out a phony a mile away

So make sure Jesus is your Lord

Before you try to make Him theirs

4. And then always be ready to give an answer

Two things jump out at me

#1 – you've got to always be ready to give an answer

Pretty insightful, huh?

That's why I'm up here and you're not

Obviously, if you don't feel confident to explain the reason for the hope you have

You need to get confident

I've debated offering a class

I'm getting a master's degree in apologetics

I like talking about this stuff

But I don't want to take the time

To prepare and offer a class

If no one wants that

If you would be interested in learning more about

Always being ready to give an answer for the hope you have

Would you text your name and email address to

931-486-4494

That's for you guys too

If there's several who have interest

We'll set something up

So the first thing

You've got to always be ready to give an answer

But the second thing that jumped out at me

Peter is saying

Be ready if they ask questions

He didn't say

Here's how you strike up a conversation

Or here's how you talk to someone on an airplane

Or here's how you preach at someone on a street corner

Or here's what you do when you go door to door

He said be ready

When your friends ask questions

Maybe being the salt of the earth

Is a lot about living in such a way

That it makes people thirsty?

4-H Story...