

Lake Cities Community Church  
January 16, 2011  
Pastor Craig Schill  
Series: 1 Corinthians

**“A True Winner!”**  
1 Cor 9:1-27

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I would like to tell you the story of the Blue Wig. You might remember that back in the summer of 1988 I was a camp counselor on the banks of the Chesapeake Bay at Camp Sandy Hill in Maryland. Each week for eight weeks, a new group of boys would come to spend time with “Chief Craig” in the Algonquin Cabin, one of about eight cabins for that age group. And then I would lead my boys in unending fun– horseback riding, swimming, canoeing, a weekly campout complete with “Sandy Hill Stew” and ghost stories (Christian ones, of course),

However, there was one camp activity that the boys did not like, and that was cleaning the cabin. Each morning the cabin had to be cleaned before we went to breakfast, and then while we were at breakfast, our cabin, along others were inspected and rated on several criteria – beds made, floors swept, shoes lined up and so on. The winning cabin would be the “honor cabin” for the day.

We rarely won the award. My boys did not aspire to be an honor cabin. They had other priorities – such as talking, playing, wrestling, or sleeping. It was not for lack of trying, but my speeches had little impact. *I was having a hard time motivating them - aligning their behaviors with the value of cleaning the cabin.*

And then I remembered the blue wig. And in a brilliant move of child psychology, I told my boys that if we won the honor cabin, the best cleaner that day would get to wear

the blue wig to dinner. Some of you may be thinking that to wear a blue wig at dinner seems more like a punishment than a reward, but then how long has it been since you've worked with junior high boys? It was like I had offered to them the very helmet of salvation! They threw themselves into their cleaning – cleaning as to make their mother's proud and we began to consistently win the honor cabin award! The boys were eager to win the prize – and the blue wig became somewhat legendary at Camp Sandy Hill in the summer of 1988. And perhaps they still use it today, though I doubt it.

It is funny sometimes the things that motivate us, isn't it? It is not always the things we think that grab our imagination and interest. But whatever it is that motivates us – that “thing” changes our behavior, aligns our behavior with the goal, the prize the outcome we desire. If we are highly motivated, we will do whatever it takes to obtain the prize.

The Apostle Paul sees the members of the 1 Corinthian Church a little bit like junior high boys at summer camp. They are full of energy, zeal and excitement, but are easily distracted. Their behavior did not line up with the teaching of Christ. They were fighting and arguing and sleeping, when they should have been working to clean up the church. It is time for Paul to pull out the theological “blue wig” -- that concept which should finally motivate them get serious about their faith and their walk with the Lord.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians. Our goal is to get through all of chapter nine, and to see Paul's argument and motivation. To do that as clearly as I can, we will start at the end and work our way to the beginning. The chapter breaks into three distinct sections, verses 1-19, 20-23 and 24-27. We will start now with that last section, which is Paul's climax,

## **Live Intentionally in order to win the prize. 9:24-27**

1Cor. 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 1Cor. 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 1Cor. 9:26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 1Cor. 9:27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

If you would allow me to summarize these verses, I believe Paul is saying, “**Live intentionally in order to win the prize.**” As you live your Christian life, you must not just wander around, distracted and pulled by meaningless pursuits. You do not want to box the air and accomplish nothing with your life. Paul, throughout his letters warns about laboring in vain, living without purpose and wasting time. Instead, he says - run with aim and direction. Say no to everything that gets in the way, be disciplined and self-controlled, in order to achieve victory. If that is what athletes will do to win a wreath of leaves, if a blue-wig will motivate junior high boys - how much more should we Christians be motivated, serious and disciplined when we are promised an eternal prize of priceless value?

But the question is – what is our aim? What is our purpose as Christians? What are we disciplining ourselves to accomplish? What is the prize? We don’t know yet, but it’s BIG – it is worth everything to obtain! Back up now to the previous verses, 20-23 to find out.

## **Live Intentionally, for the Gospel, and you will also enjoy its blessings! 9:20-23**

1Cor. 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might

win those who are under the Law; 1Cor. 9:21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. 1Cor. 9:22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. 1Cor. 9:23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

The ultimate motivation for Christians is: **The Gospel**. The *euangelion* the good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of God has come and through his death, burial and resurrection solved the problem of sin – and set free - all who trust in Him - to enjoy His forgiveness, joy, peace and hope. I believe the key verse for all of chapter nine is verse 23: “I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I might become a fellow partaker of it.”

Paul is not using hyperbole here. He evaluates everything in light of its impact on the gospel. Why? Because if he does – he will also be able to partake in the blessings of the gospel. This is the motivation – the prize. Through embracing the Gospel we are blessed, both with eternal life and the blessings of an abundant life today. The Gospel is like vegetables – It is good and it is good for you! So let’s add our thesis which was **Live Intentionally in order to win the prize.** Now we see that Paul was really saying: “**Live intentionally, for the Gospel, and you will also enjoy its blessings.**”

Some of you know that there is nothing, nothing, nothing as precious, as rewarding or fulfilling than to be used by God to change a person’s life. It is an emotional and spiritual feeling that no drug, no pleasure or worldly pursuit can touch. To have and feel the divine power of God work through you – through the gospel is what Paul lives for – it is what makes life worth living.

Paul looks around him and see people very, very different from him, some with the law, others without the law. Jews and Gentiles. Weak and Strong. Rich and Poor, famous and infamous, and he dove into their lives for the sake of the gospel, so that he might have the privilege of being used by God lead some to trust in Jesus.

At Camp Sandy Hill every week I had the chance to share the Gospel with my cabin and throughout the summer to see several kids come to Christ. I remember some of the conversations so clearly. One of the kids from camp, Lamar, who trusted Christ wrote to me a few months later. I'd like to share what he wrote: "Dear Chief Craig. Hi! How are you doing? The rest of my summer was fine. My dad and I now go to a church called Consolation Baptist every week and we read the Bible. I go to Sunday School and soon they're going to baptize me and my Dad." What a joy!!! **"Live intentionally, for the Gospel, and you will also enjoy its blessings.**

### **Make the tough decisions... 9:20-23. (1-19)**

Let's move now up to the first part of the book, verses 1-19. Here we discover the whole reason the gospel discussion came up in the first place. Paul was defending himself again charges leveled at him by the church that he had no authority over them. No authority to preach, to teach = and certainly not to rebuke the way he has. And the main argument the Corinthians had was that Paul was not on the payroll. It was the "You are not by boss" argument. Paul's defense is strong:

**1Cor. 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 1Cor. 9:2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 1Cor. 9:3 My defense to those who**

examine me is this: [1Cor. 9:4](#) Do we not have a right to eat and drink? [1Cor. 9:5](#) Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? [1Cor. 9:6](#) Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? [1Cor. 9:7](#) Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? [1Cor. 9:8](#) I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? [1Cor. 9:9](#) For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He? [1Cor. 9:10](#) Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher *to thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops*. [1Cor. 9:11](#) If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? He says: “Yes – I have every right to take pay from you - I am your pastor – your spiritual authority.” The only reason I am not on your payroll is by my own choice because that would not be what is best --- for the gospel!!

[1Cor. 9:12](#) If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. [1Cor. 9:13](#) Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the *food* of the temple, *and* those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? [1Cor. 9:14](#) So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. [1Cor. 9:15](#) But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. [1Cor. 9:16](#) For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. [1Cor.](#)

9:17 For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. 1Cor. 9:18 What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Paul certainly had the freedom to draw his paycheck from his church, but he chose not to because THAT was best for the furthering of the gospel work. Do you see he is applying the principle we learned last week in chapter eight? Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. Even though drawing a comfortable paycheck from Corinth would have been easier than being a bi-vocational tent maker, and easier in gaining credibility with the Corinthian church -- it was not what was best for the gospel.

I think the principle for you and I is that if we are going to live intentionally for the gospel, and seek to be blessed by its benefits, we have some **tough decisions** to make. Decisions, like Paul made, that will come under scrutiny and even criticism by others. Decisions our parents might not understand, our children might disagree with. Decisions that take the hard road rather than the easy road. In fact, let's add this to our thesis: **Make the tough decisions necessary to live Intentionally, for the Gospel, and you will also enjoy its blessings.**

To live for the gospel means by necessity to not live for something else. There is always a trade off. Someone said, "The believer is exhorted to turn away from the 101 illusive ambitions that captivate worldly people, ranging from the desire for fame to the longing for temporary pleasure and earthly wealth. Instead he is admonished to dedicate himself to Christ for eternal treasures." In other words: **Make the tough decisions necessary to live Intentionally, for the Gospel, and you will also enjoy its blessings.**

## **Application**

Let me leave you with three questions for application. I encourage you to answer each honestly and privately.

**(1) What prize do you seek in life?** What is your primary motivation? If your first answer was not something to do with following Jesus and introducing others to him -- what has captured your attention and imagination more than the gospel, the power of God? John, “Pepper” Martin played for the St. Louis Cardinals, and was the star of the 1931 World Series. A newspaper reported asked him, “What is your chief ambition?” Pepper answered, “My chief ambition is to go to heaven.” The reporter laughed and made a comment about Pepper playing the harp. Pepper said, “If there is anything foolish about reading the Bible every day, and believing what It says. If there’s anything funny about wanting to enter heaven when you leaven this world, then I’m afraid life here isn’t worth living.” That is what Paul wanted in Corinth. That no matter your occupation or hobby – the prize you seek is the gospel and its blessing. If someone asked you your chief ambition. What would it be?

**(2) What have you sacrificed for the sake of the gospel?** Paul gave up a paycheck and secure job situation. What have you ever given up for the gospel? I remember professor Howard Hendricks saying that he gave up golf for the gospel. That hobby was too consuming for him and his ministry. Nothing wrong with golf – but for him – it was something he felt he had to say “no” to. Perhaps God is asking to give up something, once and for all, Maybe it is a sinful desire or habit. Maybe it is a distraction or too consuming hobby. Maybe it is a dream that is yours but not Gods? To pursue the gospel wholeheartedly always means a trade off – are you willing to let go? Lastly,

**(3) What is God asking you to do to further the Gospel in 2011?** For Paul, living with the gospel as a priority meant he hung out with people he had little in common with. It meant preaching and church planting. What does it mean for you? How can you promote the gospel in 2011? Maybe God is calling you to share the gospel with a neighbor, to invite a co-worker over for dinner, to go on a short-term mission's trip, to serve on a ministry team, or may some to be a missionary or go into full-time Christian work. That summer at Camp Sandy Hill was one of the best summers of my life. The reason I was there was because a pastor challenged our college class to make a sacrifice for the gospel. To do something tangible. He said, "Why don't you use your summer this year to serve the Lord. I know for some of you this will be a sacrifice because you need to make money for tuition, but unless you start now living intentionally and sacrificially for the gospel you will never get around to it when you are older." That is how I ended up at Camp Sandy Hill. Where will you end up? What will you do for the Gospel in 2011?

Here is what we have learned: **Make the tough decisions necessary to live Intentionally, for the Gospel, and you will also enjoy its blessings.** May we be passionately consumed with the progress of the gospel in 2011.