



Week 38: 1 Corinthians 9-16

Study Guide for the week of Sept. 14-20

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, reflect on 1 Cor 9:24-27

At the Isthmian Games held in Corinth every two years, the winner's crown was made of withered celery. Sounds pretty silly, but what kind of crowns are you running for? We all tend to focus too much on things that have the permanence of celery – make a list of those kinds of crowns in your life.

How are you running your life? Think of your whole life from family and friends, to your vocation and hobbies, to your relationship with God and his creation. Where are you “running aimlessly”? Boxing the air? Are you showing up for practice everyday, ready to give your best? What training exercises are you using to become a stronger, quicker, better “runner”? How are you disciplining your mind? Body? Soul? Spirit?

Spend time in prayer asking God to give you the strength and perseverance to become the athlete he created you to be.

Discussion starters

1. Reread 1 Cor 9:19-23. What does it mean when Paul writes he tries to “find common ground” (NLT) or “become all things to all people” (NRSV)? Does that mean conforming to non-believers or does it mean something else? Cite examples of finding common ground without losing the truth of the Gospel message (eg different worship styles, but the unchanging message of Jesus).
2. In 1 Cor, Paul is dealing with several misunderstandings of how people should act in worship. Skim chapters 11, 12, and 14 and identify the major problems Paul was addressing. Why do you think Paul shifts gears and throws in chapter 13 where he does? Is the arrangement of these chapters any clue to how Christians should deal with disputes in the church, especially those arising from current social conventions?
3. How many of you have thanked God for your spleen today? Your spleen is an organ necessary to defend your body against infection – a vital role in your body, but the spleen is often overlooked and is an unsung hero. Reread 1 Cor 12:14-26. Who are the unsung heroes working behind the scenes in any church? How vital are their roles in the church? Are there superior and inferior roles to play in the church? How does Paul answer that question (v 26). Paul's assertion in verse 26 directly confronted the Greek and Roman “ideal” of dispassionate self-sufficiency. Do we wrestle with the same issue in our culture today? How do we apply Paul's words to our lives today?
4. Why is love greater than faith and hope (1 Cor 13:13)? If faith is trusting in God's promises, will we need faith in heaven? If hope is looking forward with expectation, will we need hope in heaven? Will we experience love in heaven?

Bible verse to memorize: 1 Cor 16:13-14