

In the book of 2 Corinthians, we learn that Paul's purpose was not to gain followers for himself, as his opponents did, but rather to gain followers for Jesus. He was more concerned for the spiritual well-being of the Corinthians than for his own glory. And we likewise should make it our primary focus to help each other grow in faith. Pastor Richard is one of the best examples of this mindset, and he has taught me a lot about how to pastor in a way that puts the spiritual growth of the congregation first. He humbly focuses more on strengthening our faith in Jesus than on making a name for himself.

Recall that Paul's opponents in Corinth desired to develop a following for themselves, and thought it was beneficial to malign Paul in order to gain followers. Starting from 12:11, Paul again defends himself by stating that everything he did was for the Corinthians' benefit, not for his own. Since the apostles devoted their lives to preaching the gospel and serving churches, they had the right to financial support from these churches. But in v. 13, 14, and 16 Paul says that he was never a burden to the Corinthians. Paul didn't take any money from them, and neither did his associate, Titus (v. 18). His opponents couldn't say the same. Just as parents sacrifice to support their children without asking their children to pay them back, Paul serves the Corinthians without taking any money from them (v. 14). He does this to show them that he's not there to exploit them. He's not in it for the money. In this church, your offering supports the pastors and staff. But money should be/cannot be our motivation. We serve the congregation because we have a heart for you all. A pastor's goal isn't to gain money, but to help people grow in Christ. Paul restates this point clearly in v. 19. Everything he did was for their strengthening. But this doesn't only apply to pastors. All of us should work for our mutual strengthening. We must have the appropriate attitude of selflessness. It's about collective growth. When I coached volleyball I had to remind myself that it wasn't about me or the other coaches, it was about helping my team grow. When it comes to ministry, I likewise have to constantly remind myself that it's not about me, but about your growth.

In vv. 20-21 Paul changes gears. He will visit Corinth again, and expresses his fear that his and their expectations would not be met. Specifically, he fears that they will be engaged in

bad behavior with regard to relationships (v. 20) and with regard to sexual immorality (v. 21). These two categories of sin were the ones that Paul had to address in 1 Corinthians. These were their problem areas before. Paul is afraid that all his effort had no effect on them. This is one of the worst fears that pastors have. We are not driven by compliments about our sermons, but rather by being able to see with our own eyes that people are growing in Christ. This sentiment is expressed in 3 John 4. We want to see that people are walking and growing in faith. This can be difficult to gauge. Sometimes we don't know until years later someone tells us that what they learned here impacted their faith positively. When I started being a youth counselor and realized how hard it was, I called my youth counselor to show appreciation for his work. Sometimes all it takes to encourage a teacher is telling them that you appreciate their service and that what you learned is helping you to grow. It's not easy to teach and preach. Youth counselors don't get paid, rather they sacrifice their time and sometimes even money for the youth. But they are in it for the spiritual edification of others. And this should be the motivation for all of us. Let us continue to pray that our purpose here may not be for ourselves but for mutual growth in Jesus Christ.