

“Leaders: Servants, Not Celebrities” (1 Corinthians 4)

We live in a world obsessed with image, influence, and platform. It’s easy—even in the church—to confuse charisma with character or popularity with Christ-centered transformation.

But in 1 Corinthians 4, Paul gives us a different picture of leadership. Not performance driven. Not power-hungry. But faithful. Humble. Christlike.

God isn’t looking for celebrities—He’s looking for stewards. People who reflect Jesus by laying down their lives, not building their brand. Leaders who serve, suffer, and stay faithful.

That’s the kind of servant leaders that God calls us to. And that’s the kind of church we want to be, but that can only happen through the transformative power of Jesus Christ.

Faithful Stewards with Christlike Character (vv. 1–7)

- Leadership is about being faithful with what God gives, not famous for what we do. (Luke 16:10; Matt. 25:21; 1 Pet. 5:2)
- Lead for God’s glory, not for applause. Accountability to Christ always outweighs the crowd. (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:23-24)
- Every gift is from God—so there’s no room for pride. (John 3:27; James 1:17; 1 Cor. 1:31)

Disciple-Making Leaders with Sacrificial Lives (vv. 8–17)

- Character counts more than charisma. Leadership that reflects Jesus will involve sacrifice, not just success. (2 Cor. 6:4-10; Luke 9:23; 2 Tim. 2:3)
- Real leaders make disciples, not demand control. Leadership walks with others in love and truth. (1 Thess. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 4:15)
- Paul sends Timothy: to model the faith. (Phil. 2:19-22)

Power That Transforms, Not Just Performs (vv. 18–21)

- It’s through Jesus Christ that lives’ are changed—it’s not just talk, it’s transformation. (1 Thess. 1:5; Rom. 15:18-19; James 2:17)

Leaders Who Reflect Jesus, Not the World

- Lead by faithfulness, not fame. (1 Cor. 4:2; Luke 14:27)
- Serve for God’s glory, not applause. (Col. 3:23-24)
- Follow Christ’s cross-shaped model, not the world’s platform-driven path. (Phil. 2:5-8)

We are called to lead with humility and courage—reflecting Jesus in how we speak, serve, and sacrifice. The Church is not a platform for egos or culture wars; it’s a community shaped by the cross, where lives are changed by the grace and power of Christ. **That kind of transformation only comes through Jesus working in and through us.** May our leadership reflect Jesus, not the strategies of the world.

Growing Notes

Who is someone in your life who models Christlike leadership? What stands out about how they lead or serve? Read 1 Corinthians 4. How does Paul challenge the Corinthians’ view of leadership in verses 1–7? What does it look like to lead with faithfulness instead of seeking applause?

In verses 8–13, Paul paints a picture of apostleship marked by suffering, humility, and endurance. Why do you think Paul uses such strong contrasts? How does this reshape our view of influence?

Paul calls himself a spiritual father in verses 14–17. How does spiritual leadership differ from worldly leadership? What role does modeling and personal investment play?

What does Paul mean by saying “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power” (v20)? How do we know when someone is operating in kingdom power versus self-promotion?

Reflect on your own leadership—at home, at work, in ministry. Where might God be inviting you to shift from performance to Christlike presence? Pray for humility, courage, and Gospel-centered leadership.