

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: 1 Corinthians

Week of September 1 (Week 5)

1 Corinthians 4: Servants of Christ



1 CORINTHIANS 4: SUMMARY

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul addresses the Corinthians' theological misunderstanding of the gospel and church, including the role of their teachers. But at the heart of much of this is the attitude of many toward Paul himself. These people are not simply for Apollos or Peter; they are decidedly anti-Paul, in the sense that they are rejecting both his teaching and his authority. This presents Paul with a genuine dilemma. On the one hand, he must reassert his apostolic authority and on the other hand, he must reestablish the servant role of an apostle. (Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 169).

OBSERVING & APPLYING THE TEXT

Starting with God

1. What do we know about the character and nature of God from 1 Corinthians 4?

Reflection: How does the character and nature of God in 1 Corinthians 4 speak to you? Does it comfort, convict, or challenge you? If so, how?

Continuing the Conversation

Be Servants of Christ (4:1)

2. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul insists, among other things, that Christian leaders are servants of Christ and are not to be accorded allegiance reserved for God alone. So when Paul talks about the nature of Christian leadership in chapter 4 how does he describe Christian leaders in 4:1?

Reflection: “Servants” in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 refers to the ministers of the gospel but from other passages of Scripture we know that we are all servants of God. As believers in Christ, we serve God at home in parenting, at workplace as employer/employee, in schools/colleges as students/teachers etc. The bottom line is this: Be Servants of Christ wherever you are called to be.

Be Faithful Stewards (4:2-3)

3. What do those who have been entrusted with church leadership need to do?
(v. 2)

4. Whose judgment does Paul care about, and when will this judgment happen?
(v. 5)

Reflection: Like “servants,” “stewards” in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 refer to the ministers of the gospel, but from other Scripture passages we know that all believers are “stewards” of God; we are entrusted with people to evangelize and disciple, with wealth, knowledge, skill and abilities to use for the glory of God. As “stewards of God,” how are you utilizing what is entrusted to you? Paul’s message to us from 4:2 is to “Be faithful stewards.”

Be a Spectacle to the World (4:9)

5. What metaphor does Paul use to describe the role of Christian leaders like him, and the role of the congregation?

6. How does Paul describe his experience of real Christian ministry in verses 10-13? Read also Luke 9:58 and 1 Peter 2:21-24. How is Paul’s experience like that of his Master – Jesus Christ?

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

September 2-6, 2024

Read 1 Corinthians 4

Monday: 4:1-2 *"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful."* Take a moment to appreciate and pray for the ministers of the gospel at Briarcliff Church and the world at-large. Pray specially that they will be faithful in ministering the word of God to their congregation.

Tuesday: 4:5 *"Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God"* Introspect your motive in judging other because at best we assume, but God knows everything and "will disclose the purposes of the heart."

Wednesday: 4:9 *"For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men."* Pray for persecuted believers who have become "spectacles" to the watching world around them because they are standing for their faith. Similarly, pray that we maybe "spectacles" in standing for our faith.

Thursday: 4:14 *"I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children."* Pray that we may have a genuine spiritual concern for fellow believers with a filial approach.

Friday: 4:16 *"I urge you, then, be imitators of me."* What Paul wants the Corinthians to imitate is his passion to live life in the light of the cross (Carson, 125). Reflect and pray on how we can be of godly influence worthy of imitation by others around us. "Holiness is not only a Christian talk but also a Christian walk" (Thiselton, 81).