

Servant—Stewards of Christ

1 Corinthians 4

Group ¹	C	V	Description
Servants of Christ	4	1-5	Don't judge, Let God do that at the right time
		6-7	Paul's use of Figurative language concerning Apollos
		8-13	Apostles are Fools for Christ's Sake
		14-21	Paul's fatherly encouragement and His representative: Timothy

Themes in the Chapter²	Discipleship, History, Outreach, Salvation
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Reflections

In the previous chapter, Paul made clear that we are not to look to men as more than servant of the Lord, each having a ministry given to him from the Lord. Now in this chapter, Paul is going to show that each minister's work is to be focused on Christ and the power of the gospel to change lives.

Questions

1. How are Christians to regard those who have been given a ministry of teaching, preaching, and leadership? V1
2. As a result of ministers having this “position”, what must they do to make sure that they are worthy of their calling? V2
3. How does Paul describe his attitude in relation to this requirement of being trustworthy? V3-4
4. What direction does Paul give to people who have been judging various ministers like he and Apollos? V5
5. What was Paul's concerned that the Corinthians learned from the example that Paul made of himself and Apollos? V6-7
6. Paul emphasizes the need for humility but how does he describe their position in Christ? V8-9
7. How does Paul contrast the apostles to the Corinthians? V10-13
8. What does Paul want to make sure that the Corinthians understood about why he was writing these things to them? V14
9. How does Paul describe both his and other ministers who would follow after him? V15
10. What does Paul encourage the Corinthians do? V16-17
11. What does Paul warn the Corinthians about while he is absent? V18-19
12. Why does Paul say that he will not focus on the things they've said? V20
13. What choice does Paul give the Corinthians as he brings this topic to a close in the letter? V21

Conclusion

¹ (NASB) “Group” column from the headings in the NASB text.

² (Full Color Bible) Theme suggestions without references to allow the reader to discover them in their reading.

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Ministers, teachers, and church leaders have been given a specific ministry from God that requires a balance of exercising authority with an attitude of humility and a willingness to put others before themselves. They must be careful as to what they teach, be willing to look foolish to people of the world for following after God, and be found by God to be the faithful, trustworthy steward of the things put in their care.

There and Then: Here and Now

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study³: *my LOG vs others SPECK. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.*

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

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P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

•

E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?

•

C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?

•

K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit? Section 13

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³ *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (The Navigators), with additions & Matthew 7:1-5.

Response to Questions

1. Ministers are to be regarded as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. The original Greek word translated as servant here is G5257 - ὑπηρέτης - *hupēretēs* - hoop-ay-ret'-ace⁴ : "A subordinate, servant, attendant, or assistant in general. The subordinate official who waits to accomplish the commands of his superior."⁵ The Greek word translated stewards here is G3623 - οἰκονόμος - *oikonomos* - oy-kon-om'-os⁶ : "An administrator, a person who manages the domestic affairs of a family, business, or minor, a treasurer, a chamberlain of a city, a house manager, overseer, steward."⁷ In essence they are to be regarded as men called to do a specific task from their superior and as His representative during their time of service.
2. They should be found to be trustworthy. The dictionary definition is "deserving of trust or confidence; dependable; reliable".⁸ Just as any manager or servant needs to be trusted by their superiors and those individuals who have been placed under their care, so too the minister is to show themselves trustworthy to God and those in their watchcare.
3. For Paul, having his life on display for people to "judged" is a small thing. He has this attitude because he is more worried about the ultimate judge that he will stand before, the Lord. So he has learned to not worry so much about what other people think about him or how he does things. He is more concerned about being a faithful servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God.
4. Rather than adopting an attitude of judgment, which they really don't have the authority to do, and leave that to God, who is the One who is able to rightly discern men's hearts.
5. There are a couple of things that Paul wanted them to learn. First, that the Corinthians should make sure that they are not exceeding what has been written. Second, that they would maintain an attitude of humility.
6. Because they have been filled and become rich, they have become royalty with all other Christians (Exo 19:5-6; Isa 61:6, 66:21; 1Pe 2:9; Rev 1:6, 5:10, 20:6). The apostles on the other hand have become spectacles before the world on God's behalf.

Exodus 19:5-6 NASB 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; **6** and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

Isaiah 61:6 NASB But you will be called the priests of the LORD; You will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, And in their riches you will boast.

Isaiah 66:24 NASB "Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die And their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind."

4 (Strong)
5 (Zhodiates, Baker, and Carpenter)
6 (Strong)
7 (Zhodiates, Baker, and Carpenter)
8 ("Dictionary.com" "trustworthy")

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1 Peter 2:9 NASB But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Revelation 1:6 NASB and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:10 NASB "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Revelation 20:6 NASB Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

7. Notice the contrast Paul makes.

Apostles	Corinthians (and others)
Fools	Prudent
Weak	Strong
Without honor	Distinguished

He also describes their (the apostles) current state: hungry and thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless, often laboring by their own hands.

Paul also outlines the responses that he and his fellow apostles have adopted toward things that happen to them: Reviled ⇒ Bless; Persecuted ⇒ Endure; Slandered ⇒ Conciliate. In fact they have become “the scum of the world, the dregs of all things.”

8. He didn't was to shame them but rather he wanted to disciple them as a father lovingly disciplines his beloved children.
9. In the words of Paul, they would have countless “tutors in Christ” but only one spiritual father, namely himself.
10. Paul tells the Corinthians to be imitators of himself. He also offers Timothy as one who would be able to remind them of Paul's teaching and lifestyle.
11. Evidently, some of the Corinthians have become arrogant, judging him harshly, in his absence. To remedy this, Paul will address them when he is able to travel to them again, God willing. At that time he will see if they have power.
12. He won't focus on the words that they speak so much, because he needs to focus more on the power of their ministry in relation others.
13. Paul gives them two options: come to them with 1) a rod or 2) with love and a spirit of gentleness. Paul is referring to his apostolic and spiritual authority as the one who founded the church in Corinth.

Key Words: New Testament, Letters, 1 Corinthians, Saul/Paul, Apollos; Pride, Humility, Servant, Steward, Discipleship

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