

Summit Woods Baptist Church
First Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Remember to begin your study early in the week so that you have time to really think (and keep thinking) about the passage without being rushed.

Recap of chapters 1-3: After greeting the Corinthian church with encouraging words about the marvelous grace with which God called them to salvation and which will sustain them to the end, Paul quickly turns to challenging them to address a glaring issue in their congregation that is not in keeping with the grace they have received from God. He appeals to them to stop causing divisions by picking favorites among the church leaders but to be united since they have all been brought together in (baptized into) Christ. Paul then describes how the gospel is foolishness to the world but is wisdom and power to the saved and that such spiritual things are only understood through the working of the Holy Spirit. Paul says that he intentionally preached the gospel to them in ways that would highlight God's power rather than relying on the world's ways of lofty speech and fancy presentation. Paul then says that divisively favoring one leader over another reveals their immaturity. For correction, he uses three word pictures to emphasize that gospel ministry is all God's work and the ministers are all coworkers together for the Lord. Chapter 3 ends with another warning about the foolishness of the world's wisdom and the wisdom of becoming "a fool" for God since God has given us everything in Christ.

❖ Day 1

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.

For these lessons, the sermon text is provided in a format that visually helps display the structure of the paragraph or section of text. The verbs are underlined. The main clauses remain to the left, and the supporting clauses are either directly underneath when they have equal priority to what comes before, or are tabbed to the right when the clause supports, develops or explains previous clauses. Suggested themes in the text are provided in the box on the left. As the class progresses, you will have the opportunity to learn how to do this yourself.

Do not boast in men (us) (3:21),
rather... regard us as:
Servants- See Acts 26:16
(same word for servant)
Stewards- See 1 Peter 4:10
of the mysteries of God-
See Matthew 13:10-11

Stewards are judged:
Not by men (3b)
Not by self (3c-4b)
But by their Master (4c)-
See Romans 14:4

Therefore do not pronounce
judgement on a steward
before his Master does!

Judgement is negative (against (v4))
and positive (commendation (v5e))

¹This is how one should regard us,
as servants of Christ

and stewards of the mysteries of God.

²Moreover, it is required of stewards
that they be found faithful.

³But with me it is a very small thing
that I should be judged by you or by any human court.

In fact, I do not even judge myself.

⁴For I am not aware of anything against myself,
but I am not thereby acquitted.

It is the Lord who judges me.

⁵Therefore 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.

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SERVANT: In the NT, ὑπηρέτης is employed to refer to many diverse types of servants, such as attendants to a king, officers of the Sanhedrin, attendants of magistrates, and, especially in the Gospel of John, Jewish Temple guards. This is different from a δοῦλος, a slave, though Paul refers to himself by each of these terms in different contexts.

STEWARD: one who has the authority and responsibility for something that belongs to someone else; 'one who is in charge of, one who is responsible for, administrator, manager'. This term helps the reader understand the nature of service provided by ministers of the Gospel. They aren't menial laborers, but trusted agents acting on behalf of, but always under the authority of, their master.

MYSTERY: Care should be taken in reading μυστήριον as the English expression 'mystery', for this term in English most often refers to a secret which people have tried to uncover but which they have failed to understand. A better understanding is: divine secret—a secret whose concerned party is a deity alone and those to whom he chooses to share the information; especially concerning the method and history of God's redemption or other supernatural information.

(Adapted from Louw-Nida and Faithlife Bible Sense Lexicons)

Be sure to read the verses listed in the commentary box on page 1 for additional insight on these key words.

1. How are the Corinthians supposed to view their leaders?
2. How does this relate to what Paul says they should *not* do in 3:21?
3. As servants and stewards, who do they work for?
4. What is the job of a servant?
5. What is the job of a steward?

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6. Is a servant or steward the owner of the things he cares for?
7. In general terms, who is the only rightful judge of a servant or steward?
8. Read the comments provided above for the words 'servant' and 'steward'. Write down a modern-day example of each.
9. What would unfaithfulness look like in your modern example?
10. To Paul, what would unfaithfulness look like in the gospel sense?

❖ Day 2

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 again.

11. List several ways that Paul has illustrated his faithfulness as a servant and steward in chapters 1-3.

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12. In Acts 20:26-27, what is Paul's self-assessment of his ministry?
13. According to verse 3, is Paul concerned about the Corinthians' assessment of him?
14. Is he particularly concerned about his own assessment of himself?
15. Then why has he spent so much time detailing the way that he went about teaching them?
16. Based on Paul's example, does the idea of not judging ourselves mean that we never review and evaluate the way we do things? Explain.
17. Whose assessment matters to Paul, and when does he say that judgment will be rendered?
18. According to verse 5, what will God disclose when He renders judgment?
19. Is that judgment negative or positive or both? Show support from today's text.

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20. If positive judgement is commendation, what is negative judgement? (Hint: Look back at 3:15 and Rom 8:1.)

21. Where in 1 Corinthians has Paul already referred to Christ's return, and what did he say the verdict would be?

❖ Day 3

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 again.

22. What is the positive instruction in the passage?

a. What does obeying it look like for us?

23. What is the prohibition command in the passage?

a. What does obeying it look like for us?

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24. How do Paul's word pictures in 3:5-17 relate to this passage?

25. Who will receive commendation from God?

26. How should the potential of receiving commendation from God impact the way we live as believers and together as a congregation?

27. Summarize the passage in one sentence.

In preparation for Sunday, pray that we would rightly view the ministers God has given to His church. Pray for the ministers in our congregation, that they would serve faithfully and hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servants."