



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sermon Series: Welcome to Corinth, Part 5

Sermon Title: The Problem With Self-Righteous People

Speaker/ Date: Armin Sommer/ October 14, 2018

1 Corinthians 4:1–21

Arrogant, self-righteousness can be as destructive as rampant immorality.

Big Idea: We must vigilantly guard against self-righteousness.

Paul offers a basic tutorial on how to avoid Self-Righteousness. It consists of several realizations.

Realization #1. We are ultimately accountable to God.

1 Corinthians 4:4

Paul says, *“Not only is it of minimal importance what you think of me. It is of minimal importance what I think of me.”* The One who will render your full evaluation is God. This is especially true when it comes to our motivations.

1 Corinthians 4:5

We are not certain of our own motives. We can’t know why others do certain things. We can evaluate behavior. But we lack the wisdom to judge the motives behind the behavior. God says, “Don’t even try to judge the motives of another person.” **Proverbs 16:2**

We can’t accurately judge our own heart; therefore, we can’t judge the heart of another

Realization #2: God is the source of every good thing

1 Corinthians 4

These Corinthians had become arrogant over what they considered their accomplishments. The result: they looked down on others. So, Paul gets a bit sarcastic. **1 Corinthians 4:8–9**

If you are involved in a successful ministry, be careful. The tendency will be to become arrogant. Remember God is the source of everything good.

Realization #3: Appearances can deceive.

1 Corinthians 4:10–13

Paul is using sarcasm here. The Corinthian believers had apparently forgotten that Paul was the one who brought the gospel to their city in the first place. If it had not been for his message, they'd be lost. Paul has sacrificed everything to spread the Word. The Corinthians, on the other hand, are largely wealthy, comfortable, and sophisticated. We in our culture often equate success and God's blessing with such flashiness and opulence. The Corinthians had basically come to think of Paul as a person of no account. How wrong they were.

They were thinking, "Something must be wrong with Paul." But they were wrong. Their arrogance caused them to conclude that Paul was a loser. We often do the same thing. But some of the most faithful servants of Christ often seem to have little to show for it in the short run. 1 Corinthians 4:14–17

Paul now drops his sarcasm and becomes tender. He urges them to imitate him not out of a sense of conceit, but as a father in the ancient world would regularly teach his sons a trade by modeling it as they studied under him as his apprentices. The warning is applicable to us as well. Don't overrate yourself or underrate others by outward appearances.

Do you realize that a seemingly fruitful ministry may not be an indicator of God's favor? Matthew 7:21 is a scary verse. Talking about a day of judgment. These are people who seemed to be doing effective ministry. They did amazing stuff in Jesus' name. But they're not even saved. Don't make evaluations just on surface appearances or even apparently fruitful ministry. There is stuff that we can't see and that only God sees. And when we see a person who seems of little account, realize... What you see of that person may not represent the end of their story. It may be just the mid-point.

Before we write off someone, we must remember that God is the author of his story. A sovereign God is able to do things no one else can. HE is the author of the other person's story.

Discussion Questions:

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?**
- **Arrogant, self-righteousness can be as destructive as rampant immorality. Is there ever a situation where self righteousness is acceptable and beneficial?**
- **Would you consider yourself a person whose natural tendency is to criticize other people? Do you apply the same standards to yourself as you do to other people?**
- **Do you ever judge the motives of other people? What is the criteria that you use? How do you evaluate whether your judging is accurate?**
- **In what real life situations would someone be inclined to judge the motives of others? What are the consequences of judging the motives of others?**
- **Explain a time when you were acting(including thinking) arrogant and self-righteous but a situation humbled you.**
- **Read Matthew 7:21-23. Now read John 13:35. What visible quality does each person present as their evidence for being a Christian? Which group does Jesus reject?**