

## **The Beauty of Christian CommUNITY**

Studies in the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians

### **1 Corinthians 4:1-21**

**“Follow the Leader who is Following Christ.”**

**Introduction:** The Corinthians were adding unhealthy attitudes and behaviors that were not part of their orientation into the body of Christ. Paul had to intervene to help reset the proper spiritual programming.

#### **I. The Servants of Christ will Receive a Performance Evaluation from God (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)**

- a. God has a leadership team that He delegates authority to for the purpose of shepherding His flock. The term servant is an officer indicating official authority in an organization. The service function is the stewardship of the Gospel message. The apostles were entrusted to invest in people to bring a return or harvest of souls (Matthew 25:14-30).
- b. God is the source of perfect evaluation of our labor. God will reveal things hidden from human knowledge about us and the secret thoughts of our heart.

#### **II. The Humility and Hardships of Christ-Like Leadership (1 Corinthians 4:6-13)**

- a. Paul warns them to stay in the boundaries of the word of God. The Corinthians were acting like they had arrived.
- b. Paul explains that being an apostle was not an exalted celebrity status. Suffering and hardship are involved in ministry. Paul was not living like a rich prosperity preaching celebrity. He said we hunger and thirst, poorly clothed, beaten, homeless, hard physical labor, they blessed in response to being reviled, they endured persecution, they responded gently to defamation (slander, speak evil of). Treated like garbage (scummy water) – offscouring (dirt rubbed or scraped off the skin).

#### **III. Corrective Discipline for the Advancement of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 4:14-21)**

- a. Paul reminds them he initially introduced them to Christ. They had many instructors but one spiritual father. Parents raise children to imitate them. A student will be like their teacher (Matthew 10:25; 1 Peter 5:3).

- b. Timothy was Paul's travel companion and mentee. Paul sent Timothy to help get the church back on task. Timothy would remind them of Paul's ways in Christ. Who is an example of following Christ in your life? Are you imitating Christ? (1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; Romans 8:29).
- c. Paul had a consistent system that he used to teach all the disciples he worked with. There is a body of doctrine and tradition with regulated liberty. The "ways in Christ" transcend culture, politics, and economics. God may use us to organize people into a community of faith for the purpose of mission. A disciple is more an apprentice than a student sitting in a classroom only.
- d. Paul had spiritual authority to oversee church discipline. The integrity of the ministry was at stake. Some were walking in pride and arrogance as if Paul would not confront them. Intentionally defying God approved leadership is rebellion. Paul was alerting them that he would come and confront them in person. Like Moses God would confirm who had leadership authority (Numbers 16:1-40).

**We will all be held accountable by God. The saints will be held accountable for our ministry service and evaluated for rewards in addition to eternal life. Unbelievers will be held accountable for every sin committed by word, deed, and thought. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).**

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