

- [According to a 2022 Gallup poll on organizations and institutions - 31% have a "great deal" of trust in the church or organized religion](#)
- [28% have a great deal of trust in the public schools](#)
- [27% have a great deal of trust in banks](#)
- [11% have a great deal of trust in the television news](#)
- [7% of Americans had "a great deal" of confidence in Congress.](#)

From Watergate to Whitewater Scandals // Eron Bankruptcy or Exxon Oil Spills

Impeachments to Immigrant // Loop Holes or UFO's

I think it is fair to say that Institutional trust is not thriving, according to the quick research I did on the internet this week.

Ironically, after all of those stats - [92% of business leaders & consumers agree that organizations have a responsibility to build trust.](#)

But how is trust built after it has been fractured? When there is division seemingly all around us. When people are divided politically, racially, ethnically, and socially, is there any hope for the cycle to stop? What kind of leadership does it take?

If you know much about world history, you know that this is not an American Problem... A government problem... or a modern problem...History books and The Bible are filled with stories of failed leaders, movements, organizations, and regimes that have floundered and failed. And Yet, we are sitting here as a part of a movement that, despite all of its messiness, is continuing to be a beacon of hope to the world.

In our study of 1 Corinthians, we are realizing that from its infancy, there have been messes inside of the Church that have needed to be addressed -

This letter from Paul to the people he loves in Corinth is designed to be a sort of surgery on the church.... He knows that if it the things he is seeing and hearing about continue to spread, the results will be lethal. So, in this portion, Paul is going to address what leadership should look like as a Christian in the church and what it shouldn't

He is specifically talking from his position as a leader in the church. But I don't want anyone in here to assume you are not a leader. We are all called to lead - the mandate to MAKE DISCIPLES is given to us all. The reality is that we are all leading someone.

1 Corinthians 4:1

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted (stewards) with the mysteries God has revealed.

In this one verse, Paul is trying to create a word picture that makes sense for those who are reading this letter, which may be lost a bit on us.

The first is with his use of the words “servant.” the specific word Paul uses here would have literally meant “under rower,” and on this port city, they would have likely **pictured a trireme** which was a three-tiered boat powered by under rowers. The job of these servants or under-rowers was to listen to their master and row at their command and cadence.

And the next image, Paul gives them is “those entrusted” or stewards - which would have been the manager of a household. - This was the person who was often a servant who was the manager of the affairs of a household. Think Bulter (Batman fans picture Alfred or those who are West Philadelphia born and raised may think Geoferry)

These are the people entrusted with keeping the household functional and entrusted with the mysteries of their masters.

So, right out of the gate, Paul wants us to see that Christian leadership is a call toward being a **servant and a steward**

1 Corinthians 4:2

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

As preferences and pride begin to permeate the Church, Paul is set on puncturing their pretensions of what it means to lead in the Church.

He wants to remind these people that it is not about their Kingdom or their reign. But rather, as Servants and Stewards, our call is toward faithfulness toward the King and his Kingdom. That is your purpose and critical to the mission and advancement of Christ's Kingdom. Faithfulness to Christ is a requirement for those who have been given much- Faithfulness is cultivated by a life full of faith. More on that later.

1 Corinthians 4:3-5

3I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

5Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

As these people, Paul is writing to be convinced it is their job to play judge and jury. Paul expresses that he has incredible freedom from the pressure of performing for the sake of others. See, one of the beautiful benefits of fulfilling the roles of a **faithful servant** and **faithful steward** of Christ is incredible freedom, knowing that your identity is **Secured** in your master and not everyone else. Paul knows He only has an audience of one to perform for - and this is incredibly freeing!

Paul's faithfulness was cultivated by a life full of faith!

So, Paul says to the church, who isn't his biggest fan... It's a small thing that you all don't love me... the only one who can judge my faithfulness is Christ. (There is security and freedom in faithfulness to your master) If you are still following, you may see Brad's sermon inspired me last week to keep the alliteration going.

So, if you are taking notes, we now know that Christian Leaders are called to be Faithful Servants and Faithful Stewards, and in that is great freedom and security! Paul is not concerned with the criticisms and comparisons being lobbed at him by people.

Here is a quick question that has become my leadership litmus test of how well I am Faithfully Serving and Faithfully Stewarding the way God has asked me to. Whether you are the CEO of a company, a teacher, a Sunday school leader, a parent, a coach, a writer, an artist...

When I lead others, do I want someone for them, or do I want something from them?

The other way to ask that is, Am I looking to serve or looking to be served? I will admit that I had to wrestle through this last night while coaching an elementary school basketball game and getting beat. Am I coaching because I want these kids to perform for me? So I can win as a coach? Or do I want something FOR THEM? Faithful servant leadership was not just a new idea that Paul came up with out of nowhere. Another one of Paul's letters to the church in Philippi reminds us that the King of the Universe -

Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

This is what Jesus modeled and preached when was on this earth, proclaiming what His Kingdom was all about. It was the complete opposite of the culture around them. It was the opposite of what people seemed to be hoping for in a messiah. Paul continues on in Chapter 4, helping people see that he and the other Apostles are following this model of faithful servanthood and faithful stewardship that Jesus modeled

1 Corinthians 4:6

6Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.

Paul is making it clear that he and Appolos are **faithful servants & stewards** who are submitted to God and his Word. We don't just make up our own wisdom that fits their agenda. We don't have any interest in arguing over who is better. Pride has no business between us. We have nothing to be puffed up or boast about at the end of the day.

1 Corinthians 4:7

7For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Paul asks these rhetorical questions to remind them of the reality of the Gospel. None of us are special. None of us earned our way into this Kingdom. All of this is given to us as a gift by an incredibly good and gracious God and master. The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the acknowledgment of the sins that made it necessary. To help drive this point home even further, Paul turns toward the tool of irony, perhaps better known as sarcasm

1 Corinthians 4:8

8Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you!

These people were suffering a bit from what scholars called over-realized eschatology. Meaning they were living like they are already walking on streets of Gold. That God's Kingdom had been fully realized, or at least in their church. They were living like they were already reigning with Christ. They were the model church. They had arrived, and their work was done.

Paul wants to shake them a bit to wake them up. The church at Corinth had settled into the illusion that they were the best that any church could ever be

I kind of imagine it like RR Brown, the founder of this church 100 years ago, who began in a tent, walking into this building, I meet him at the door super excited to give him a tour of the building - LOOK AT US! WE DID IT! WE ACCOMPLISHED THE MISSION!

I think he would be like... Are you kidding me?

I have got to be honest, it's hard not to get caught up in this sometimes. I remember one baptism on the Green where I got to baptize a couple of friends, my sister, and my brother in law I was the middle school pastor at the time and like 20 middle schoolers had been baptized... and for a slight moment, I remember thinking - WOW... LOOK AT US... LOOK AT ME... I was getting ready to post some braggadocious picture on Instagram and this huge Green Building behind me caught my eye, and having a thought I believe was prompted by the Holy Spirit... what about all the people in that building or that neighborhood across the creek, or the people in the thousands of cars zooming by our building every day?

I am not saying every single story is not worth celebrating. Thank God for the stories we got to celebrate this morning through baptisms; thank God for the marriages restored, Thank God that healings are taking place, that people are being set free, that babies are being safely born in other countries because of faith servants here are CCC! These things are worth celebrating!

But the church in Corinth had fallen into the same trap that I did that day. Thinking that they had arrived. Thinking that they were the model church. Thinking they could be dismissive of other leaders and churches around them. And Paul wants to shake them up a bit and understand NO! There is more work to do, and it is not going to be accomplished in your Holy Huddles. It is going to take more faithful servants and stewards

This is why we keep talking about our ONE MORE - It's why we have light bulbs shining in the atrium, representing our mandate to keep going! The moment that we think that Christ Community Church is the model. Is the greatest. Is the only one that God is working through in our city, I think we become offensive to what the Spirit is doing in our city, in our country, and around the world. Paul continues to drive the point home even deeper.

1 Corinthians 4:9

9For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings.

Again, Paul is painting a word picture for these people. He wanted them to picture a common procession that would have happened in their culture at Kings and Rulers would flex their power on the way to be entertained at a theatre or Collosium.

They would be in the front, carried in on the spectacular Chariots, escorted through the streets, and eventually to their box seats. At the end of the procession would be those who would be the spectacles for the event. These were people literally walking toward their death, by either a gladiator or a wild beast like a lion. They would be the sport on display and slaughtered for the sake of entertainment. Paul wants them to see the stark contrast between those who lived as servants and those who lived as superiors

1 Corinthians 4:10-13

10We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! 11To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

Paul has made it clear that leadership in the Church means you are Faithful Servants, Faithful Stewards, and friends you will Suffer To the onlooking world, this looks like foolishness. It is the opposite of climbing the ladder. Paul is saying, don't expect us to look like politicians or famous conquerors. In fact, you don't want us to lead like that. That is not the way of Christ's Kingdom. It is a totally different scorecard and measure of success than the world and culture.

Paul's faithfulness was cultivated by a life full of faith! He lived a life full of faith in the promises of Christ and His Kingdom. An unshakeable confidence in a faithful God.

In my opinion, one of the biggest missteps and injustices that can be done by the Church is for us to not teach about suffering well and that we should expect suffering.

Jesus made two promises in **John 16:33** before He headed to the cross that are supposed to give us peace. ***"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."***

Often, I think we are surprised by suffering, especially when it happens as a result of following Jesus faithfully. But Paul wants the church to see they should not be surprised by suffering. In fact, you should expect to suffer and be a spectacle. Can I be honest? A

lot of times, when I am face to face with any sort of suffering, the first place my mind wants to go is to think God didn't keep His end of the bargain. I know there are people in this room, watching online right now who are suffering. And maybe you are feeling like God is distant.

I want to remind you, like I have to remind myself in those moments of suffering, that God has not left you nor forsaken you. In fact as the Psalmist says, He an ever-present help in times of trouble. He draws near to the brokenhearted. The God of the Universe is not some distant and aloof God watching how this will all play out from a box seat in heaven. Rather God has made His home inside of you, inside of me. One of the most common descriptions of the Holy Spirit is a comforter. He is our source of power and strength when we feel our weakest. And when things do not make sense, He promises to be our peace that surpasses understanding.

More than almost any other time... it is In your suffering that Christ is revealed in you and through you

When I am in pain, crying out to God. Shaking my fist! Saying God I have done everything you asked. I have served faithfully! I did nothing to deserve this! I picture a God wrapping me in His embrace and whispering the words "me too." Our Savior, this Jesus that we follow, perhaps more than any other human to walk on the face of this earth was a faithful servant, a faithful steward of His Father's plan, and a faithful sufferer.

Paul contrasts their pride and pretentiousness with his own life, a life that ultimately modeled Jesus. A Savior who got down and washed the scum off their feet. A faithful servant, faithful steward, and a faithful sufferer

One of the things I do whenever I get to officiate a wedding is make the bride and groom write each other's vows. I am not opposed to traditional vows, but I want them to wrestle with what they are committing to. Because at the end of the day, if you ask me what a successful marriage is, the bottom line is that it is a faithful marriage.

I don't think that it is by any accident that the Church is called the Bride of Christ. We are the bride of Christ, called to be faithful to the groom, and there is a real enemy doing everything in his power to keep us from being faithful. I think one of his biggest tactics is to get you to think that this relationship is about your being served and not the servant.

But our commitment, our vow, and our allegiance to follow Jesus is serious. If you read the gospels, you will read stories of people walking away from Jesus sad because they wanted Jesus plus something else.

One of the vows Jesus made to the Church, his Bride, was that When Jesus said he was going to build his Church, nothing would stop it.

I have to think that Paul and the other apostles had some moments where they wondered. Each time they heard about the next one dying, I wondered if they thought the movement would die out... but they remained faithful to a promise maker and promise keeper.

Someone shared this quote with me this week and I could not find it's origins, but it was powerful...

Don't be indifferent to this thing called Christianity. It was created for you by the blood of Christ, and it was preserved for you by the blood of martyrs for 300 years it was forbidden and believers were publicly whipped and dragged by their horses until their brains ran in the streets, and their limbs were torn off and their noses were cut off, and their eyes were dug out with spoons and sharp. Knives were run under their nails and melted lead poured over their shoulders. They were drowned. They were beheaded, they were crucified, they were drowned between stones. They were torn by beasts. They were smothered in fires, and they were scraped by seashells along their backside.

Over 2000 years later, Jesus is remaining faithful to His promise. And the crazy thing about that is that in all of the years of Church History has, the way of Jesus, or the religion that we call Christianity, been the popular way of life. In fact, despite the odds, it has been built the most in the midst of suffering.

Church we cannot live a faithful life without living a life full of faith. Your faithful servanthood, your faithful stewarding, your faithful suffering are all echoes of Jesus... the one who was first faithful to you... The one who loved your first... the one who loved your despite.... The one who suffered and died for you while you were His enemy... your faithfulness is a testimony to His faithfulness. You have been invited to be a part of something unstoppable!

What incredible news!

When we were unfaithful... He remained faithful to continue to woo His people back... the best and brightest in Hollywood and at Hallmark... Nicolas Sparks or Nora Roberts... could not write such a scandalous storyline.

Let me end with the declaration we sang earlier.

Christ is my firm foundation

The rock on which I stand

When everything around me is shaken

I've never been more glad

That I put my faith in Jesus

'Cause He's never let me down
He's faithful through generations
So why would He ail now?
He won't