

Pastor Search Committee . . . Part 1!

Our Text: **1 Corinthians 4:1–5** *Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*

Christians love to evaluate pastors . . . All kinds of criteria are used to determine who are the best of them:

- The most successful
- The most influential
- The most gifted
- The most effective

Some magazines even make surveys and write up extensive reports, carefully ranking the pastors by:

- Church membership
- Attendance at worship services
- Sizes of church staff and Sunday school
- Academic and honorary degrees
- Books and articles written
- Numbers of messages given at conferences and conventions

But as popular as this may be, this is not how God sees it!

So how does God see it?

First Corinthians 4:1–5 shows us the true nature and marks of God's ministers.

- It sets forth the basic guidelines and standards by which ministers are to minister and be evaluated.
- It deals with what the congregation's attitude toward the minister should be and what the minister's attitude toward himself should be.
- In short, it puts the minister of God in God's perspective.
- **And we will see that popularity, personality, degrees, and numbers play no role in the Lord's perspective—and that they should play no role in ours!**

Remember, in context here we are still talking about the divisions over different ministers . . . **MINISTERS SHOULD NOT BE RANKED BY THEMSELVES OR BY OTHERS, BUT THEY WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE BY GOD HIMSELF!!!**

All who are true to Scripture in their preaching and living should be treated equally **SO LONG AS THEIR DOCTRINE AND LIFESTYLES ARE APPROVED BY GOD!!!**

But if these two essentials are missing, there must be evaluation and confrontation from the people of God!

Romans 16:17 *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

1 Timothy 5:20 *Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.*

Let's dive in here to start our **Pastor Search Committee!**

Who Should The Minister Be?

1 Corinthians 4:1 *Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

“**Us**” refers back to 1 Corinthians 3:22:

1 Corinthians 3:22 *whether **Paul** or **Apollos** or **Cephas**, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours.*

But by extension, all other “**fellow-workers**” are applied here:

1 Corinthians 3:9 *For we are God's **fellow workers**; you are God's field, you are God's building.*

In other words, ministers should be seen a certain way . . .

“Christians should not parade worldly standards of the ministry before unbelievers any more than they should parade those standards among themselves. We have no right to use worldly criteria—such as popularity, personality, degrees, and numbers—to make the gospel seem more appealing. We should not try to make the world see God's humble messengers as anything but what He has ordained them to be: “servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”” John MacArthur Jr.

So what is a servant?

Servant = **ὑπηρέτης** *hypēretēs* = *One of the ship's crew who is an under-rower.*

This word originally referred to the lowest the lowest galley slaves . . . The ones rowing on the bottom tier of a ship. They were the most menial, unenvied, and despised of slaves. From that meaning the term came to refer to “**servants**” of “**subordinates**” of any sort, to those under the authority of another.

Does this mean we are “slaves”? **YES!!!**

Now that word have been loaded with a lot of baggage because of atrocities that have happened, that we all should be against . . . But originally a slave was someone who was subordinate and subject to another in **EVERYTHING . . . AND THAT IS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS!**

We cannot say, **“No, Lord”, AND JESUS STILL TRULY BE OUR LORD!!!**

As His “under-rowers”, He commands where the ship is to be taken and we just paddle to get it there!

Another thing to remember is that ministers of Jesus are subject and subordinate to Jesus more than we are to other men . . . **BECAUSE WE CANNOT SERVE MEN RIGHTLY IF WE ARE NOT SERVING JESUS RIGHTLY!!!**

- A minister who becomes so occupied with counseling and helping his congregation and community that he spends little time in the Word is unable to meet those people’s deepest needs, because he has neglected his greatest resource for correctly knowing and adequately meeting those needs.
- That usually leads to compromising God’s truth for the sake of peoples’ desires.
- Before all else he must be a servant of Jesus Christ.
- Then, and only then, can he best serve people.

Remember now, Paul was an Apostle, yet he considered himself to be a **“hypēretēs”, a “galley slave”,** of his Lord, and he wanted everyone else to consider him, and all of God’s ministers, in that same way.

- Galley slaves were not exalted one above the other.
- They had a common rank, the lowest.
- They had the hardest labor, the crudest punishment, the least appreciation, and in general the most hopeless existence of all slaves.

In fact Paul shared this just a couple of paragraphs ago:

1 Corinthians 3:5-8 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Then look at how he was later going to say it in this same letter:

1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

In other words, Paul preaching the gospel was no cause for boasting or praise . . . **HE WAS ONLY DOING WHAT THE MASTER, JESUS, COMMANDED HIM TO DO!!!**

To sum this up, a servant's obedience should be to his master alone, and his desire should be to please his master alone!

So what should a minister be doing in obedience to his Master?

Not only are we “**servants**”, we are also to be “**stewards of the mysteries of God**”:

1 Corinthians 4:1 *Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and **stewards of the mysteries of God**.*

Stewards = **οἰκονόμος** *oikonomos* = *The manager of a household. Someone to whom something is entrusted.*

This word literally means a “**house manager**”, or “**a person placed in complete control of a household**”.

- The steward supervised the property, the fields and vineyards, the finances, the food, and the other servants on behalf of his master.

Yes, a minister needs to have his qualifications in order . . .

1 Timothy 3:1-13 *This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

But of all the things he needs to manage, there is one that deserves priority.

So what is the main thing the minister needs to manage? “**The mysteries of God.**”

- Once again, a mystery (*mustērion*), as used in the New Testament, is that which was hidden and can be known only by divine revelation.

- As a steward of God’s mysteries, a minister is to take God’s revealed Word and dispense it to God’s household.

Acts 20:20–21 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

“The reason so many Christians have spiritual malnutrition is that so many preachers dispense an unbalanced diet of biblical truth. What they preach may be scriptural, but they do not preach the full counsel, the whole purpose, of God.” John MacArthur Jr.

Some years ago a certain well-known pastor made a statement in a magazine interview that was paraphrased like this:

“I decided that the pulpit was no longer to be a teaching platform but an instrument of spiritual therapy. I no longer preach sermons; I create experiences. I don’t have time to write a systematic theology to give a solid theological basis for what I intuitively know. What I intuitively believe is right. Every sermon has to begin with the heart. If you ever hear me preaching a sermon against adultery, you’ll know what my problem is. If you ever hear me preaching a sermon about the coming of Jesus Christ, you’ll know that’s where I am heartwise. It so happens I’m not hung up on either of those areas so I’ve never preached a sermon on either one. I could not in print or in public deny the virgin birth of Christ or the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ or the return of Christ. But when I have something I can’t comprehend, I just don’t deal with it.”

A MINISTRY LIKE THIS IS CORRUPT, PERVERTED, AND WILL BRING TO RUIN ALL WHO ARE A PART OF IT!!!

- Rather than bringing men to God, this minister is standing between men and God!
- God’s Word is explicit about adultery, the virgin birth of Jesus, and His second coming.
- God’s ministers may not be required to fully understand those truths . . . **BUT THEY ARE REQUIRED TO FULLY AND FAITHFULLY PROCLAIM THEM!!!**

2 Corinthians 4:1–2 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

- Therefore, the preacher or teacher who disregards certain Scripture texts, or twists them to support his own ideas and programs, adulterates the Word of God.

- The cults try to support their false doctrines by using Bible texts out of context and with interpretations that clearly contradict other texts.
 - But the Bible is not a repository of prooftexts for men's opinions.
 - **It is the repository of God's Truth!**
 - **And the minister of God is a steward of this Truth!**
 - His concern should not be to please his hearers or to dispense his own views.
 - But rather . . .
- 2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

- Any minister who does not study the Word **CANNOT** properly teach the Word!
- He cannot handle accurately that which he does not know.

Sadly, ***"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."***

Let's conclude this study . . .

What Is Required Of Them?

1 Corinthians 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

Faithful = πιστός *pistos* = *Worthy to put trust in. True. Credible. Sure. Certain.*

By far the most important quality of a good steward is faithfulness to his master's household and possessions . . . **And without faithfulness he will ruin both!**

Remember, God does not require brilliance or cleverness or creativeness or popularity . . . Yes, He can use servants with those qualities, **BUT FAITHFULNESS AND TRUSTWORTHINESS ARE REQUIRED!!!**

Look at how Paul speaks of Timothy:

1 Corinthians 14:7 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

And this wasn't only important to Paul . . . **It was important to Jesus!**

Matthew 24:45-51 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- God supplies His Word, His Spirit, His gifts, and His power.
- All that the minister can supply is his faithfulness in using those resources.
- The work is demanding but is basically simple: taking God's Word and feeding it faithfully to His people—dispensing the mysteries of God, proclaiming the hidden truths He has made known.
- There is to be no glory here, ranking one above the other.
- The best that any minister can be is faithful, which is just fulfilling the basic requirement.

When the Lord returns, (***AND HE WILL RETURN***), the only absolute requirement by which He will judge His servants is **FAITHFULNESS!!!**

Are we faithful to Jesus today?

Let's pray . . .