

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"WORKING YOUR WAY DOWN" | 1 CORINTHIANS 4 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "puffed-up"?

"Under-Rowers and Estate Managers" (1 Cor 4: 1-5)

Paul shares that all believers are servants and stewards of God's church and should be faithful, despite criticism, and wait for God's evaluation of their service. **How can believers better handle criticism and look to God for feedback?**

"Who's the Fool?" (1 Cor 4: 6-13)

Believers shouldn't be "puffed up" or arrogant because all they have and are comes from God. **How does knowing all someone has and is comes from God lower pride and arrogance?**

"Parental Care" (1 Cor 4: 14-21)

Paul reminds Corinthians that the kingdom of God is not about words but about God's transformational power in their lives. **Who is someone who's life shows or showed God's transformational power? How have you experienced that power?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Paul wants the Corinthians, and all believers, to be humble learners experiencing God's transformational power instead of puffed-up, entitled critics. **How would you describe your approach to church leaders and teachers lately: learner or critic? Who is humbly following Jesus who you could learn from more? Pray and ask God to give you an opportunity to be mentored in your faith.**

Working Your Way Down

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those Online and in our *Additional Seating* in the Fellowship Hall.
- B. **Slide1 Celebrate Recovery:** CR is for ANY adult who is struggling with ANYTHING alone and ready to find the encouragement, support, and hope of a community of believers who can walk beside them on a journey of healing.
1. We are currently in need of **male leaders** who have completed a step study, been involved in recovery for a year or more and part of our congregation, so that we can continue to offer *small groups for men* who are seeking help and hope. Please contact Julie or Pstr Dan w/any questions.
- C. **Slide2 Legacy:** If you have a child/youth in CK, 678, or Rise High, we want to invite you to “*Legacy*” on **Wed, Nov.29th at 6pm** in the Fellowship Hall.
1. Spend an hour with us to dream about the Youth Center and the outside youth fellowship areas. You will have an opportunity to hear **Shane and Cam’s vision for our youth programs** and tell us what you and your kids would like to see included. This building is going to be our legacy for our current youth and this next generation, *come join in on the conversation as we dream.*
- D. **Slide3 My Trip Highlights:** Some days up front that were *rest for my soul*. My Roh conf was awesome like usual. I love the servants there, they love Jesus and serve Him well in their work with the Roh. Country Updates. Prayer answered on some countries we were asking for God to send some *field workers* there to help them (Pak, India, Ache). Pray for Myanmar: Resistance groups from 3 of the states (against the Burma Army/coup) have already seized 150 military outposts. Marshall law imposed. Generals are nervous. Fighting in Rakine state. Vacuum? Success?
- E. Prayer:

II. Slide4a Intro: Working Your Way Down

A. **Working Your Way Down.** One country that I visited on this trip was a Muslim country. I jumped a **Grab** at the airport to take me to my hotel. My drivers name was *Adam Mohammad*, he was my only chatty taxi ride. He started w/my thoughts on the Israel/Palestinian conflict (I gave my thoughts). He asked me, *what I did for a living, if I made a lot of money, if I was #1 in my church, if I was at the top?*

1. I told him what I did. And then I told him, *I make a lot of money, ha!* And that I'm #1 in my church. **But ...** I said it's really different in church, it's not about making a lot of money. And if you make your way to the top, you find out that you're on the bottom. I explained the **inverted triangle of a kingdom upside down**. I explained **Jesus #1** at the very top, *washed the feet of those He served*. [not about how much \$ I make, **but** how many people I serve, & serve well, like my Roh Muslim friends]

B. **Slide4b** Henri Nouwen says it well. *"The society in which we live suggests in countless ways that **the way to go is up**. Making it to the top, entering the limelight, breaking the record – that's what draws attention, gets us on the front page of the newspaper, and offers us the rewards of money and fame. The way of Jesus is radically different. It is the way not of upward mobility but of downward mobility. It is going to the bottom, staying behind the sets, and choosing the last place! Why is the way of Jesus worth choosing? Because it is the way to the Kingdom, the way Jesus took, and the way that brings everlasting life."* [let's read what Paul says about, *how to work our way down*]

III. **Slide5a UNDER-ROWERS AND ESTATE MANAGERS (1-5) READ**

A. **Servant** - an **under-rower** - an oarsman on the bottom level of a vessel.

1. Regardless of how **prominent or authoritative**, **all believers are merely oarsman on a ship**, responsible to **their Captain, Jesus Christ**.
2. Its entrusting **someone else to steer** the direction you are going. You just row.
3. I think the greatest imagery of this was the Epic 1959 film, Ben Hur.
 - a) Ben-Hur/Charlton Heston was **a galley slave** for 3 years, as slave #41.

b) Battle Speed. Attack Speed. Ramming Speed. *Rest.*

c) The Roman commander said to all the under-rowers, *You are all condemned men, we keep you alive to serve this ship. So row well and live.*

B. **Steward** - an Estate Manager, a House Keeper.

1. **Picture** in Gen.1:28 *tending/stewarding God's creation/the land.*

2. **Picture** *a steward in charge of his masters house.* (Joseph in Potiphar's house)

a) This is one who *manages everything* for his master, *but owns nothing himself.*

3. **The church is the house. Christ is the master. We are the stewards.**

C. **Faithful** - implies *unswerving adherence* to a person or thing, one full of faith, *trustful and not simply trustworthy*, dependable. **God requires every ... usher/greeter, Children's Church worker, CG facilitator, sound person, worship leader, every servant, every steward to be found FAITHFUL!**

1. **David** was faithful with *a few sheep* **then** was allowed to oversee *100's of 1000's* Israelites.

D. **Judging** - Paul wasn't concerned w/3 out of 4 judgments: **By you** (they were off base anyways). **By a human court** (*lit.* a human day, in the sense of a human judgement day). **By myself** (even his own assessment was immaterial). **It is the Lord who judges me** (he was only concerned w/the scrutiny of the Lord, who knows our hearts, our desires, our every thought and motive).

E. **Judging:** Did you know **God uses people** that are deeply flawed **or even** deep in sin?

1. **Samson. David. Moses.** You might think, *it would sure be nice if He didn't do that,* **but** He does. **Because,** then who would He use?

a) I can prove we all think this, we are all completely surprised and shocked when a *celebrity* pastor falls, when they get exposed. **We want to throw everything they ever said or did away.** *I guess they were never saved?*

2. You can't draw the verdict of anyone's life yet, **not** even your own.

F. **Some will praise us, some will criticize us.** I can provide a **big head**, the other possible **depression** (or at the least, it makes you 2nd guess yourself).

1. **But even criticism can be used in our life:** It will be either **a weapon** to *batter* us (from Satan), **or a tool** to *build* us (from **God**).

G. **Slide5b Practical application** for *criticism* that comes at us: **Expect it** (Jesus was & so will His followers). **Evaluate it** (Tozer, *If the critic is right, he has helped you. If he is wrong, you can help him. Either way, somebody gets helped*). **Wait on the Lord** (not to *everyone else*). **Confront the accuser** (Swindoll, *Go directly to the person holding the knife. For until you take the knife away, the back stabbing will only continue.*). **Remain silent** (sometimes the more you try to defend yourself the more you appear guilty). **Never take revenge** (or, never kick a skunk).

IV. Slide6a **WHO'S THE FOOL? (6-13) READ Paul's Sanctified Sarcasm**

- A. (6) **That none of you be puffed up** (pride, self-important) - There's nothing like reading the biographies of some of God's saints *to cure a superiority complex*. Heb.11:35-38 *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*
1. **Story:** I remember as a kid having a basketball that started to separate. Out bulged the little black rubber liner (size of a small egg). We still used it, **but** it wasn't as *trustworthy* when we dribbled it.
 2. The **Corinthian believers** were like my basketball they had gotten **puffed up** (6,18 & 19 *arrogant/same word*).
- B. (7) Paul takes the stand against them with his *Sanctified Sarcasm*.
1. The true servant **celebrates** the *diversity* of gifts, & **values** other servants.
- C. (8) msg *Isn't everything you have and everything you are sheer **gifts** from God?*
1. ***Do me a favor put out your hand** (palm up). Everything you own you can see in your hand. *Wait, I don't see anything. Exactly!* Ps.24 *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.*
- D. (9,10) msg *We're something everyone stands around and stares at, like an accident in the street. We're the **Messiah's misfits**.*

E. (12) When **reviled**, we bless; when **persecuted**, we endure - Jim Elliot's famous quote, at age 22, in his journal, on *the cost of following Jesus*. **Slide6b** "*He is no fool, who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*" [Ecuador, 50's]

V. Slide7a **PARENTAL CARE (14-21) READ**

A. Life is a school, so be teachable. Our Father uses many hands and many voices to teach us.

B. Paul was saying, *not in their words, their philosophy, and their dogma, but in Power ... which they didn't have.*

1. **Slide7b** Alan Redpath asks, "*I wonder if sometimes **competence** is a covering for our lack of the transforming power of God the Holy Spirit?*"

C. (20) msg *God's Way is not a matter of mere talk; it's an empowered life.*

1. Here in this chapter we find *the principle of all ministry, the background for all Christian living*. Paul was simply a **faithful servant** of **Christ** and a **faithful steward** of the former *mysteries of God*, now revealed.

D. **Prayer:** *Battle Speed. Attack Speed. Ramming Speed. Or Rest.*

E. Keywords: