

Paul's First Letter to
the Corinthians

FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL COMMUNITY

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

- 1 Corinthians 4:1,2

Class Time

- Prayer Requests
- Scripture Reading and Summary – 1 Corinthians 4:1-21
- Class Discussion:
 1. *How should the Corinthians regard the apostles?*
 2. *What are the mysteries of God?*
 3. *What does Paul teach “everywhere in every church?”*
- Outline and Lesson

1 Corinthians 4 (ESV)

1 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

7 For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!

9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.

11 To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless,

12 and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure;

13 when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

14 I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

15 For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

16 I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

17 That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

18 Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.

19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.

20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

21 What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

1st Corinthians -- 4:1-21

Apostles should be regarded as servants and faithful stewards of God's mysteries who will be judged by God who alone will reveal the purposes of each heart. Paul has used Apollos and himself as an illustration for the benefit of his brothers in Corinth, appealing to them not to engage in boastful factions, especially since they have nothing that has not been given to them. He uses mocking, biting irony to castigate the Corinthians for their high opinion of themselves and their low opinion of the apostles who are considered scum. Paul says he does not write to shame them but to warn them as his children in Christ, and like a loving Father, he urges them to imitate him and says he sent Timothy to remind them of his ways before he comes himself to confront those who are arrogant.

Summary Statement

**Discussion
Question #1**

Is Paul's strong statement about how the Corinthians should think about the apostles (v 1) a continuation of the point he was making in chapter 3? What idea described in chapter 3 conditions how the Corinthians should regard the apostles? See 3:21 in particular.

**Discussion
Question #2**

Paul writes in v1 that the apostles are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” What are the mysteries of God? Here are verses that illustrate how Paul uses the term:

Romans 11:25, Ephesians 3:6, Ephesians 5:31–32, Ephesians 6:19, Colossians 2:2, Colossians 4:3, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Timothy 3:16.

How did the apostles and prophets come to know what these mysteries were? How do we know what these mysteries are? Here are more verses to help:

Daniel 2:28; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:51–5;3 Ephesians 1:9–10; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:25–27.

What was the duty of the apostles regarding these mysteries?

**Discussion
Question #3**

What does Paul teach “everywhere in every church?” How does Paul model this teaching. See these verses:

1 Corinthians 4:15–17, 1 Corinthians 10:32–11:1, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17, Philippians 4:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9, 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:10–11, Titus 2:7, 1 Peter 5:3.

The Ministry of the Apostles

- I. A Stewardship of the Mysteries vv1-5
 - A. Regarded as servants v1
 - B. Required to be faithful v2
 - C. Judged by God vv3-5
- II. An Example for the Corinthians vv6-7
 - A. Benefit v6a
 - B. Brothers v6b
 - C. Boasting v7
- III. A Spectacle to the World vv8-13
 - A. Pointed mocking vv 8 & 10
 - B. Apostolic spectacle v9
 - C. A poor estate vv 10-13
- IV. A Father to the Children vv14-21
 - A. Admonishment vv14-15
 - B. Emulation vv16-17
 - C. Confrontation vv18-21