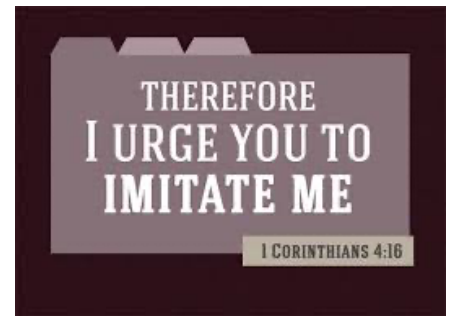


# 1 Corinthians, Chapter 4

First Corinthians Chapter 4 concludes St. Paul's counsel to the factions in the Corinthian congregation. In this chapter, Paul refers to himself and Apollos as servants and stewards who are accountable only to God. To the Corinthians, who in pride had set themselves up as critics of one another and of God's servants in their midst, such faithfulness and humility may well serve as an example. In relation to his Lord, Paul thinks of himself as a steward subject only to God's judgment. In relation to the Christians in Corinth, he is as a father to children. Whether he is present or absent, whether he speaks words of correction or of comfort, St. Paul always has their spiritual welfare at heart. **Read: 1 Corinthians 4**.



1. The “servants” Paul uses originally referred to slaves who served as house managers or stewards of their owner’s possessions. In 1 Cor. 4:1, Paul says he and his coworkers are entrusted with “the mysteries of God,” referring to something that can be known only when God reveals it. How does God reveal His mysteries to us?
  - a. Romans 16:25-27
  - b. 1 Cor. 2:12-13
2. St. Paul says the primary requirement of a servant or steward is trustworthiness or faithfulness to the duty (1 Cor. 4:2). In his letters to St. Timothy, he writes about the duties of a pastor. Read 1 Timothy 4:11-16. How do these duties apply to ministers of churches today?
3. Whether or not someone is faithful is a matter of assessment or judgment. St. Paul lists four possible judges of his own faithfulness as a servant in 1 Cor. 4:3-4.
  - a. To what standard of faithfulness can a congregation rightly hold the pastor accountable? (Consider: Acts 17:11)
  - b. To what standard of faithfulness can the community in which the pastor lives hold him accountable? (Consider: 1 Timothy 3:7)
  - c. To what standard of faithfulness can a pastor hold himself accountable? (Consider: 1 Timothy 3:9)
  - d. To what standard of faithfulness does the Lord hold the pastor accountable? (Consider: 1 Cor. 4:2-5)
4. St. Paul uses irony and sarcasm to try to get the Corinthians to see their pride, haughtiness, and spiritual immaturity. What do you think he means in 1 Cor. 4:8 when he writes that, in their own estimation, they had “become kings”?
5. St. Paul includes himself among the apostles who had to suffer persecution for Christ’s sake – in the arenas where Christians were killed by gladiators or wild animals in other ways.
  - a. What hardships and persecutions did St. Paul endure for the sake of Christ? (Read: 2 Cor. 11:23-29)

- b. What does St. Paul say that such experiences revealed about himself in the following Scripture:
  - i. 2 Cor. 11:30
  - ii. 2 Cor. 12:5
  - iii. 2 Cor. 12:9-10
  
- c. What would you say to someone who is suffering hardship because of his or her faithfulness to Christ? What would you do to help or encourage that person?
  
- d. When the apostles were persecuted for Christ's sake, they responded as Christ commanded (Matthew 5:11-12, 44). Is there any way in which you might have the opportunity to practice Christ's command in your own life? If so, share your thoughts.
  
6. St. Paul refers himself as the spiritual father of the Corinthians, since he had brought the Gospel to Corinth first. In what ways does St. Paul offer himself as an example?
  - a. 1 Cor. 4:17
  - b. 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1
  
7. In another father-child reference, St. Paul calls his co-worker Timothy his "child" (1 Cor. 4:17) In what sense was Timothy Paul's child?
  - a. Acts 16:1-3
  - b. Timothy 1:2
  
8. What understanding is behind the expression "if the Lord will" (1 Cor. 4:19)? See: James 4:13-15)
  
9. Note how St. Paul speaks to some in the congregation at Corinth in 1 Cor. 4:18-21. The arrogance of some in the congregation could only be met with a rebuke if their attitude did not change. While Christians prefer to deal with one another with gentleness, sternness is sometimes required. Why is this so?

**Closing Prayer: (*from LSB 589 – Speak, O Lord, Your Servant Listens*)**

- 1 Speak, O Lord, Your servant listens, Let Your Word to me come near; Newborn life and spirit give me, Let each promise still my fear. Death's dread pow'r, its inward strife, Wars against Your Word of life; Fill me, Lord, with love's strong fervor That I cling to Your forever!
  
- 2 Lord, Your words are waters living When my thirsting spirit pleads. Lord, Your words are bread life-giving; On Your words my spirit feeds. Lord, Your words will be my light Through death's cold and dreary night; Yes, they are my sword prevailing And my cup of joy unailing! Amen.

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**Sources:** God's Word for Today: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 1997), LifeLight: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2007), Luther's Works (CPH, Fortress), Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2000)