

Church Gone Wild: Week 4  
**Servants & Pride**

1 Corinthians 4  
Pastor Derek Vreeland

**1 Corinthians 4:1**

In chapter 3, Paul helped the Corinthians understand the nature of the church and church leaders. He now wants them to be clear on his role as a leader in the church.

He says they should regard him as a servant & steward. The word “steward” means “manager.” A manager in Bible times would have been a slave responsible for managing the household.

As servants, Church leaders are managers of the mysteries of God, particularly three essential mysteries:

- The mystery of the Trinity (God's nature)
- The mystery of salvation (God's work)
- The mystery of Scripture (God's word)

**1 Corinthians 4:2-3**

The one standard by which all stewards (managers) are judged is FAITHFULNESS. *Are they trustworthy?* If you are going to manage my household, I need to know that I can trust you.

God looks for leaders who are trustworthy. Leaders are servants and managers of God's household. We are not in a position to judge somebody else's servant.

**1 Corinthians 4:4-5**

There were already those in Corinth who had judged Paul. *Their verdict was he wasn't really a church leader.*

Their judgment was misplaced, because it is God who will judge those who are his servants.

Therefore, we should not pronounce judgment on anybody.

Jesus himself said, *“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven”* (Luke 6:37 ESV).

“Judge not” means that we do not issue the final verdict on a person's character or relationship with God.

We do judge people in terms of right and wrong based on the three mysteries: the Trinity (God's nature), salvation (God's work) and the Scripture (God's word). *We will talk about an example of this next week in Chapter 5.*

We do not judge people in terms of their relationship with God, their character or even their doctrine as related to the non-essentials.

The three mysteries are the essentials. Other doctrines such as end times, spiritual gifts, drinking alcohol, etc. are non-essentials.

A popular saying in the church since the 17<sup>th</sup> century has been: *In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.*

We have to keep ourselves from judging others and from hanging on to a judgmental attitude, which puts us in a superior position over someone else.

**1 Corinthians 4:6**

A judgmental attitude inevitably leads to pride.

Critical, negative, judgmental people typically get puffed up with pride and just suck the air out of the room. Their judgment is typically over some unimportant issue.

They, like the Christians in Corinth, think that they have the corner of truth and they are (obviously) right and you are (of course) wrong.

**1 Corinthians 4:7**

The church in Corinth was a church gone wild in the area of pride. Paul begins his attack on their pride with three rhetorical questions:

- o Who sees anything different in you? (equality)
- o What do you have that you did not receive? (grace)
- o Why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (humility)

These questions give us a sacred moment to realize that all we have is a gift from God.

### **1 Corinthians 4:8**

His attack on pride moves to irony and sarcasm.

The Corinthians thought they had arrived because:

- They were filled with the Spirit
- They experienced the gifts of the Spirit
- They understood a great deal about Greek philosophy.

Today we have Christians who fall into the same trap. They get filled with the Holy Spirit, start speaking in tongues or experience other spiritual gifts and then all the sudden they think they have it all figured out.

Living a life filled with the Spirit is an essential, but it doesn't mean you have arrived. It means that you are now ready to begin!

The Corinthians believed they had received the fullness of the kingdom of God. While the kingdom of God is ALREADY here, it is NOT YET here in fullness. We have to live in that tension.

### **1 Corinthians 4:9-10**

He is referring to the gladiatorial games which had become popular in the Roman Empire. Gladiators (or anyone) who were sentenced to die were thrown into the arena at the end of the day. Their death was a spectacle; it was for the entertainment of the crowd.

Paul then moves back into a sarcastic mode to attack their pride.  
*Their theology of COMFORT needs to be tempered with the theology of the CROSS.*

### **1 Corinthians 4:11-13**

Paul drops the sarcasm and just shoots straight. They were judging him, because he didn't seem to have it all like they did. They thought they were so far advanced because they spoke in tongues and were experiencing material comfort.

A judgmental attitude is not the only doorway to pride. Spiritual gifts and material comfort can only lead to pride, because you assume that you have somehow earned them.

He draws a final comparison with strong language.  
*We have become the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.*

Scum and refuse are similar words that refer to the filth that is washed from the body. *Gross!*

### **1 Corinthians 4:14-15**

Paul isn't trying to lay a guilt trip like your mom used to! Paul is trying to give you a Father-to-son (or daughter) talk.

### **1 Corinthians 4:16-17**

He wants them to imitate him as he imitates Jesus. As a father, Paul learned that you have to lead by example.

*You teach what you know, but you reproduce who you are.*

### **1 Corinthians 4:18-19**

Some, not all, had become puffed up with pride.

### **1 Corinthians 4:20-21**

The kingdom of God which is ALREADY and NOT YET is not a matter of words, but power.



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**CHURCH**  
AMERICUS, GEORGIA  
245 Southland Dr.  
Americus, Georgia 31709

229-924-7409

[www.cornerstoneamericus.com](http://www.cornerstoneamericus.com)