



Community Group Discussion Guide

May 5, 2024

1 Corinthians 3:18-23; 4:1-5 | Found Faithful

MOTIVATE

Starter Questions:

- ⇒ *Many of us had chores as a kid, or have responsibilities now, that we would rather not do. If you could get rid of one chore or responsibility forever, what would it be?*
- ⇒ *What are some of your current responsibilities for which you are held accountable? How does this accountability affect your approach to these responsibilities?*

DISCUSS

Paul condemned the Corinthian church for creating divisions by using worldly wisdom to judge ministers of the gospel. They had fooled themselves into thinking they were doing the right thing by dividing the church and exalting human wisdom to support their contentions with others. In 1 Corinthians 3:18-23 and 4:1-5, Paul reminded them that true wisdom is not found by looking to the world, but to God who created them. Therefore, they should not spend their time judging others, but instead resting in the power of God and living out the calling He gave to them.

- ⇒ *Why must we guard against divisiveness in the church?*
- ⇒ *How are divisions in the church contrary to the gospel?*

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 *Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," 20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."*

Instead of the Corinthians pursuing the standards of the world, Paul challenged them to become a fool in the world's estimation by following the wisdom that comes from God. Paul quoted Old Testament wisdom literature to drive home the futility of wisdom that does not come from Him (Job 5:12-13; Psalm 94:11). Just as he did in 1 Corinthians, chapters 1 and 2, Paul again compared and contrasted the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God.

- ⇒ *What do we know about the wisdom of the world versus the wisdom of God?*
- ⇒ *Can you describe a time when you chose worldly wisdom over God's? What was the result?*
- ⇒ *Can you describe a time when you chose God's wisdom over the world's? What was the result?*

The Corinthians applied worldly wisdom to evaluate their leaders, valuing the presentation of the message more than the content. We are often guilty of applying worldly wisdom to our church leadership or message, too. You don't have to look far to find a church that depends on the prestige of its members or the influence of its pastor to promote its message.

Compare this to the early church: they owned no property or treasures and their leaders had no formal training, yet they turned the world upside down. The church should depend not on money or prominence, but on prayer, sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit. The church that imitates the world may seem to succeed, but in time it will turn to ashes in eternity.

The same is true of our personal lives. If we build our faith around worldly wisdom instead of godly wisdom, then our faith does not rest on truth. Worldly wisdom can sound close to godly wisdom, so we must anchor our hearts in God's Word to stand against the world.

- ⇒ ***What are some ways that worldly wisdom sneaks into our churches? How does it sneak into the way we evaluate leaders and sermons?***
- ⇒ ***How does this begin to affect our faith and the way we see God?***

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 *So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and 23 you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

The Corinthian church fell into a habit of boasting about belonging to the leader who baptized or disciplined them. They pledged their allegiance to a servant of God instead of the Master Himself. They needed to learn that they ultimately belonged to God, not man, and that their teachers belonged to Christ, not to them.

- ⇒ ***How have you been guilty of "boasting in men" when it comes to your spiritual heritage or conversion?***
- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote from Warren Weirsbe, "Perhaps we might have our personal preferences when it comes to the way different men minister the Word. But we must not permit our personal preferences to become divisive prejudices. In fact, the preacher I may enjoy the least may be the one I need the most."***

To belong to Christ means that "all things are yours." How rich we are in Christ! We have freedom and liberty that comes from the depth of His grace. Because we belong to Christ we also have a responsibility, as He has given us gifts and blessings for His glory and the benefit of His people. When we realize that we belong to God alone, we focus on glorifying Him alone, which brings harmony to our church body.

- ⇒ ***What riches do we have in life, death, the present, and the future because we belong to Christ?***
- ⇒ ***How should belonging to Christ shift our perspective to boast in Him alone?***

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 *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.*

Paul urged the church to think of leaders as servants of Christ, not competing leaders of factions. A servant does what his master tells him to do. The Hebrew word for servant is *sharat*, which means, "to wait on" or "to serve." The Greek word for servant is *hypēretēs*, which means, "an under rower, subordinate rower," like the slaves who rowed large Roman galley ships. Paul was essentially saying that he and his fellow teachers were not the captains, but the galley slaves. Therefore, there is no reason to put one teacher on a pedestal, for how can one slave be greater than another.

⇒ ***Why are we tempted to value ourselves as more than just servants of Christ?***

A steward is someone who manages everything for his master, but owns nothing. The Greek word *oikonomos* means “faithful and sensible manager.” We see this exemplified in Scripture when God gave Adam the responsibility of caring for the earth (Genesis 1) and when Joseph managed Potiphar’s household (Genesis 39). The stewardship that Paul shared with Peter and Apollos reinforced his teaching that one was not better than the other, since they all shared the same responsibility.

What exactly were they responsible for? Paul indicated that their stewardship was over the “mysteries of God.” The Greek word used here is *mystērion*, which means, “a revealed secret, something that cannot be understood apart from divine revelation.” Paul was referring to the revealed plan of salvation through Jesus Christ which the apostles had been entrusted to preach. He reminded the Corinthians that his responsibility was to faithfully oversee the spread of the gospel by serving his Master and Savior.

⇒ ***What are some ways that the apostles and early church leaders served and stewarded the gospel faithfully?***

As followers of Christ, we are bound by the same command to faithfully serve Christ and to steward the gospel well. Everything we have belongs to God and everything that we are belongs to God. We should use it all for His glory. Whether it be finances, property, time, influence, opportunity, passions, personality, or possessions, it should all be carried out according to the will and purpose of God.

⇒ ***What has God given you that you can use for His glory? Are you being faithful and stewarding this well?***

⇒ ***What are ways our Community Group can faithfully serve and steward the gospel?***

1 Corinthians 4:3-5 *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.*

Paul knew his ministry would ultimately be judged by God. He was not concerned about others evaluating his effectiveness. He understood he had a responsibility to evaluate himself. This is what he referred to when he said, “I am not aware of anything against me, but I am not thereby acquitted.” However, Paul acknowledged that even his self-judgment was not as important as the Lord’s.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that ultimately God will reveal the effectiveness of our ministries in the last days, as well as our secret sins and deepest desires. Because Paul’s identity was secure in Christ and he rested in the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection, he could endure any slander or worldly judgment in the present and could face his final judgment with peace and confidence.

If we have entrusted our lives to Jesus, then our faith rests in the power of Christ in God. We can be confident when we stand before God at our final judgment that He will not see our sin, but our

perfect Savior who died in our place. This empowers us to live as Paul did: not buried by the weight of judging others or ourselves, but freed to faithfully serve our Master.

⇒ *Why do we often succumb to the temptation to judge other believers?*

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: On our own, we cannot be faithful enough to consistently trust in God, steward our blessings well, and act righteously toward those God has called to lead us. But we serve a faithful God, who has revealed the way to salvation to us by His Son, Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection we are blameless before God and we have all that we need in Him. This frees us to rest in His power, which enables us to serve and steward out of love and gratitude.

⇒ *How can we be sure that our faith is resting in the power of God?*

⇒ *When you really evaluate your life, can you call yourself a servant or slave of Christ? What might be standing in the way?*

⇒ *How do you feel when you think about standing before God in the final judgment? What might those feelings reveal about where your faith lies?*

2. Pray: Confess any worldly wisdom you have been trusting in and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with godly wisdom. Ask God to transform your words and actions to mirror His wisdom and values as you manage the opportunities and blessings He has given you. Thank God for His grace that saves you from judgment. Admit your dependence on God and rest in His faithfulness.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Christian Standard Bible Study Bible (2017), pages 1815, 1817.*
- *English Standard Version Study Bible (2008), page 2395.*
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (2015), pages 547-550, 1109-1110, 1135, 1290, 1435-1436, and 1506-1507.*
- *New International Version Life Application Study Bible (1997), pages 2066-2067.*
- *Wiersbe NT Bible Commentary (2007), pages 464-466.*