

Week 7 LEADER Discussion Questions

Text: 1 Cor 4:1-13

Icebreaker: On a scale of 1-10, how concerned are you about others' opinions of you?

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

2. Paul tells the Corinthians to think of him and other ministers as "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." In what sense are ministry leaders both servants and stewards?

Paul says they are servants "of Christ" and stewards "of the mysteries of God." Being a servant of God, then, implies that ministry leaders ought to have clarity about who they're accountable to. Being a steward—a word often associated with things of value—means that leaders should recognize and respect the value of what they have been entrusted with. They have responsibility for teaching and living out the gospel message, not to mention the influence they have on others as they carry out their stewardship.

Application: How else, besides as servants and stewards, are ministry leaders regarded by people today?

3. Paul expresses a freedom from the judgment of others in verses 1-5. Where does he say this perspective comes from?

In short, it's found in remembering that the Lord's judgment is far more significant than any human's.

Application: What benefits can a church experience when its leaders are not overly consumed with trying to please people? What benefit can we all experience from a similar mindset?

4. Verses 6-7 cut to the core of the divisions in Corinth: "puffed up" pride. In response, how would you summarize the point Paul is making in verse 7?

The point is simple but profound. All we have is from God's hand...our ability and even our desire to work hard. Do we have some level of responsibility over what happens in our lives? Yes. But all of our existence is because of God. Pride cannot take root when we remember that we have been given all that we have.

Application: Think about your greatest achievements in life, including those areas you've worked hardest, whether in academics, athletics, career, etc. In what sense did you "receive" even these from God?

5. Paul sharply contrasts the Corinthians' experience with that of the apostles in verses 8-13. Why would Paul highlight the apostles' hardships and low standing in the world?

This is yet another element of Paul's response to the Corinthians' practice of aligning themselves with different leaders—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, etc. We might think of Paul's response as saying, in-effect, "So you're trying to gain worldly status (which you already have) by attaching your name to me? We apostles have no status in the world. In fact, we're the scum of the world."

Application: Which can you relate to more if you think about your expectations for the Christian life—the kind of life the Corinthians experienced or that of the apostles?