

The Royal Route to Heaven

1 Corinthians Chapter 4

In Chapter 4 of 1 Corinthians Paul presents these pictures of himself: a servant of Christ, a steward, a spectacle, and a father. As Paul challenges the believers in Corinth to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, may we be challenged to examine the sincerity of our own walk, that we may stay on this Royal Route.

As you begin this study, pray for insight from the Holy Spirit, for ears to hear His voice and a heart to receive all that He has for you this week.

Key Word(s)

Read through the entire chapter, looking for words or themes that are repeated. You might want to underline them in your Bible.

1. One word that is new in this chapter and used several times is “judge”.
 - a. How many times did you find this word in the first five verses of 1 Corinthians Chapter 4?
 - b. Write a definition below.

2. Make note of any other words that are repeated or that you feel are significant here and include a definition.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.

As we begin Chapter 4, it might be good to look back to Chapter 1 and remember the issue Paul is addressing.

“Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’” 1 Corinthians 1:12

The people were arguing over who they claimed as their teacher, or leader in the faith. Paul has already said that Christ must be first, and the foundation of all teaching. Now he goes on to address where he and Apollos place themselves, and it is not above any others.

1. In 1 Corinthians 4:1, Paul says, “*Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ...*”

a. Write a definition for *servant*.

b. This word is also translated minister. Expand your understanding of what Paul is saying with a definition of minister below.

The word translated “*servant*” here in NKJV is “under rower” (literally) in the original language. It means a subordinate rower, rowing in the belly of the ship, one who can’t even see where they are going but simply takes orders from above.

c. With this in mind, write your own explanation for what Paul is saying to the people in Corinth about how he views himself.

2. Next Paul describes himself and Apollos as “*stewards of the mysteries of God...*”

a. What is a steward?

b. What does Paul give as the requirement of a steward?

c. In the context of this letter, whom or what would a steward need to be faithful to?

3. Paul says they are “*stewards of the mysteries of God...*” From the following scriptures, what do you see about the *mysteries of God*?

a. 1 Corinthians 2:7

b. Ephesians 3:3-6

c. Colossians 1:26-27

4. Consider 1 Corinthians 4:4 in NKJV and also in the following translations:

Weymouth translation –

“Though I am not conscious of having been in any way unfaithful, yet I do not for that reason stand acquitted; but He whose scrutiny I must undergo is the Lord.”

NLT –

“As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don’t even trust my own judgment on this point.”

a. Paul says in verse 3 that they have judged him, but how does he say he feels about that in verse 4?

b. 1 Corinthians 4:4 says, *“For I know of nothing against myself...”* or in NIV it says, *“My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent...”* What do the following verses say about judging ourselves?

1. Psalm 19:12

2. Psalm 139:23-24

c. Paul says that he is not *justified* by his judgment of himself. How is Paul and how are we justified? Include scriptures if you can.

5. Paul continues to clarify in 1 Corinthians 4:4 by stating, *“...but He who judges me is the Lord.”* Aren’t you glad that it is the Lord alone who judges and He alone whose judgement is righteous? Now read verse 5 again and share what you find about the Lord’s judgment.

We cannot live our lives governed by what others think of us or how they judge us, and we should not judge others. God is the only one who can rightly judge. (Note: It is not for our sins we are judged, for we are forgiven through Jesus Christ, but for our stewardship of all that God has given us.)

6. As you read 1 Corinthians 4:5, there are three main points. Share your thoughts on each one.
- a. “*Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes...*” (You might begin with Matthew 7:1)

 - b. “*...who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.*” (You might begin with Jeremiah 17:9-10)

 - c. “*Then each one’s praise will come from God.*”

7. What more do the following scriptures add to our understanding of 1 Corinthians 4:5?
- a. Galatians 1:10

 - b. 1 Thessalonians 2:4

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-13.

1. In verses 6-7 Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to be *puffed up*.
 - a. What does it mean to be “*puffed up*”?

 - b. How does Romans 12:3 apply to this thought?

2. In 1 Corinthians 4:7 we are asked a question that we all must answer: “*And what do you have that you did not receive*”? Read all of verse 7 again and then answer this question for yourself below. You may want to include scriptures.

3. Paul contrasts the position he and Apollos have with the position of the Corinthian believers in verses 8-11. Share some of those contrasts below.

4. The purpose of the contrasts you just found in question 3 are given in 1 Corinthians 4:9, “*for we have been made a spectacle to the world...*”

a. What does it mean to be a spectacle?

b. Considering the definition above and the responses given in 1 Corinthians 4:12-13, how could Paul and Apollos’s example be used to bring glory to God?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-21.

1. As you read this section of chapter 4, what relationship does Paul express between himself and the Christians in Corinth?

2. How does this relationship reflect in Paul’s words to these Christians?

3. Write the bold statement Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 4:16 below.

a. What was Paul’s reason for saying this?

b. What does 1 Corinthians 11:1 add to the meaning of this statement by Paul?

4. From 1 Corinthians 4:17, why did Paul send Timothy to the Corinthian church?

5. What choice did Paul offer them in verse 21?

a. What do you think would be the deciding factor?

b. What does Proverbs 3:12 say about the discipline Paul describes?

In closing...

1. In this chapter Paul set himself and Apollos up as examples of how to walk as servants of Christ. He gave three specific roles. As you consider each of the roles below, ask the Lord to help you to examine your walk and describe how you have seen each of these in your Christian life. You might respond to just one or all three.

a. Steward

b. Spectacle

c. Father

2. Paul described ways that he has suffered in his walk for Christ. In what ways has your love for Jesus provoked you to endure more than you would have before you were a believer?

3. Paul said to “*imitate me*”. Consider your own life. Could you say this to those around you? Why or why not?