

1 CORINTHIANS

discussion guide

OVERVIEW FOR PART 1:

Join us as we walk through the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. We'll see the many cultural similarities between the pacific northwest and ancient Greece, as well as be challenged in how we are designed to live out the gospel through the local church.

In the first mini-series we will look to the first four chapters, where Paul deconstructs the counterfeit places we find meaning and significance, and makes his case for why Christ is the greatest person for us to look to for our status and hope for the future.

PART 1: WEEK SIX *Servant Leaders*

Text: 1 Corinthians 4

One of the reasons the Corinthian Church experienced much brokenness in their relationships and division in their community was because they had a worldly view of leadership. They wanted to follow leaders who resemble powerful Roman rulers or articulate Stoic philosophers. In their hearts, they had begun to value traits the world upheld and devalue Christ-like attributes in leaders. This affected how they responded to Paul's leadership and how they responded to one another. We become like those we follow. And lead like those we respect. The Corinthians aspirations toward ungodly leaders led them to treat one another in ungodly ways.

Paul had to remind them that leadership in the Church and leadership that follows Jesus looks very different. First of all, godly leaders recognize that they are Accountable Servants. They report to and are held accountable by Jesus. In the end, he will judge us. That is why Paul informs them that their judgement means very little.

Human judgement is premature, distorted, external and ultimately not from God's perspective. Paul wants them to know that he serves Jesus and does not live for their approval. This frees him up to lovingly correct them where necessary. It also keeps him humble because he submits to God.

He also shows them that leaders who lead on behalf of Jesus realize they lead with gifts God has given and therefore have no room for boasting. They also don't always get treated well. He and the other apostles have suffered greatly for the cause of Christ. He is willing to be mistreated and persecuted because he is not pursuing comfort, safety or wealth. In a sarcastic way, Paul confronts the Corinthians syncretism. They want to use the gospel to affirm their worldly desires for wealth, status and power. They believe they can embrace the values of the Kingdom of God and the world around them at the same time. Paul reminds them that following Jesus, and leading like Jesus, means you may likely suffer like Jesus, lose status, power and even resources.

Lastly, Paul reminds them that he comes to them like a loving father. He is going to have to bring correction and rebuke, but he doesn't want to bring it in a heavy-handed way. He wants them to receive him as a loving father so that he can lovingly discipline them. Godly leadership goes after the heart, not just the external behavior. Paul clarifies that this kind of leadership is not just done with words but with presence and power. That is why he sends Timothy, his beloved son in the faith. Timothy is a picture of a transformed life through the power of the Spirit and an expression of Paul's love for the Corinthians. He wants them to imitate his life not just hear his words. Good leadership doesn't just talk, it walks the talk in a way people can follow and imitate.

Read: 1 Corinthians 4

1. How is Paul's description of leadership a picture of Jesus as the ultimate servant leader?
2. How would our leadership of others change if we imitated Jesus in the ways we lead others?
3. Which of these leadership principles do you struggle with most and why?
 - a. Accountable Servant
 - b. Humble Sufferer
 - c. Loving Spiritual Parent

4. How can we lead one another like Jesus and how will be being to do that this week?
5. How we become servant leaders at work, school or in our neighborhoods and what will we do this week?