

A Faithful Steward

What is a steward? He is an appointed person responsible to keep order, as an overseer of a large household or estate. A faithful steward would be one who is loyal and trustworthy to what he has been given to do.

In I Corinthians 4, the issue is the stewardship of Paul and his companions: *"Let a man so account of us, as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."* He was indeed faithful, God's appointed Apostle, though some saints were questioning his authority and not hearkening to his teachings or ways: *"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."* (Verses 1, 16)

Believers can also be considered stewards of what God has entrusted to them. The gospel of grace, along with our physical body and spirit are God-given. *"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your **body**, and in your **spirit**, which are God's."* (I Cor. 6:19-20)

As we ponder this amazing change, it can clearly alter our whole perspective on living our daily life. So, what does it teach you? Are you a faithful steward with your many resources?

Just A Minute! With Scripture

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be made bold for emphasis.

I Corinthians 4: Man's Judgment Is 'A Very Small Thing'

Saints can worry about so many things, especially about what others think. Those of us who tend toward being people pleasers in the flesh, can validate that this is no small matter. It can cause much internal grief and anxiety. Should we exalt what others might think as we live our life by sound doctrine?

Scripture can put things into their proper perspective. *"But to me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self."* (I Cor. 4:3) As we walk by faith, man's judgment is not to be significant.

Paul was judged by the saints at Corinth, and then compared to other teachers, though he was their father-in-the-faith: *"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."* (I Corinthians 4:15)

Corinthian saints were exalting teachers in their midst, and speaking against Paul, who had labored with them a year and a half. (Acts 18:11) Contentions, envying, and strife developed, prompting the book's goal: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."* (I Cor. 1:10) Their thinking needed adjustment.

What can we learn from this experience? I Corinthians 4:4 relays that we're not to elevate others, nor even trust our own views, but acknowledge God as our judge, *"For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord."* (I Cor. 4:4) Exalting any person's opinion above God's, gives it power over us. It's like being under the law of 'what others think,' producing fear within us to measure up. The conclusion: God is the only one you need to please; His position is above all and to be your sole authority.

Questions to ponder: Are you fully persuaded that God will help you learn what is written in the Bible? He can lead you by the Spirit. Do you believe the Word is applicable and will help you in the details of your life? Confidence in God comes as you read and study the Scriptures. It takes time and diligence to learn Christ's mind, which is God's eternal perspective, enabling you to make judgments and wise decisions.





Search it out!

Living As Who You Are In Christ

I Corinthians 4: Real Wisdom To Live And Make Judgments

Examine verses!



I Corinthians 1-4 is the first section of the book; it explains God's wisdom/power to help 'carnal babes' to get back on track. Chapter 4 clarifies that living unto God is a labor of love; suffering is to be expected. It enables us to reign with God eternally. *"...I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." (I Cor.4:8)*

Chapter 4 was designed to build on the previous teachings to help saints grow. How they built on the foundation of Christ affected their thinking, decisions, & spiritual walk, things assessed by God. (Ch. 3) Yet, Corinth judged/rejected Paul and his teaching, though he was their Apostle, a faithful steward, and father-of-their-faith. He warns, *"...judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts..." (I Cor. 4:5)* Study it out to understand more fully:

1. Observe key, repeating words: Find two words or phrases that are used more than once in Chapter 4. Define & meditate upon them. How did this help you?

2. Notice personal examples: Paul was used as an example of suffering. (Vs. 9-16) When he then says to follow him, to what was he referring? Is it to follow him as their Apostle, to suffer, or both? (Note context)

3. Pay attention to themes: Suffering is a key topic in Paul's epistles. Various terms were used, i.e. suffer, suffering(s), tribulation(s), persecution(s), distress(es), affliction(s). Use a concordance to find/read passages about suffering in Paul's letters. Why is there so much about suffering from Romans 8:17, onward? Could it be that once we become spiritual adults (Romans 8) and choose to live godly, this will be the natural result, one we need to expect in order to be prepared?

4. Note 'apparent' inconsistencies: Paul says: *"...shall I come unto you with a rod..." (Vs 21)* This seems to be the opposite of grace. What was the purpose in warning the Church in this way? Were the Corinthians 'just babes,' or carnal, like the children of Israel? (I Cor. 3:1) Look ahead, did Paul have saints use 'the rod' in Chapter 5? How/why? Meditate on the difference between how to deal with the carnal, versus a babe (new believer). (Rom. 14-15) What does 'using a rod' really mean?

5. Comparisons/contrasts: Paul uses terms: 'puffed up' & 'the power.' How are the terms similar/different?

**Newer students: Focus on 'reading' Scripture rather than on using many new study insights. When you're ready, try one or two activities above.*

As Time Marches On, Truths Can Be Easily Forgotten

God knew where the Corinthians were functioning; the Church had departed from the foundational Truths. They had regressed so much, Paul sent Timothy to stir up the doctrine: *"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheous, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church." (I Cor. 4:17)*

Truths will be easily forgotten by any believer, if they are not regularly kept in mind and practically applied. A renewed mind is crucial to a saint's spiritual life, otherwise, he will justify himself and fall back to old habits, things that are comfortable/familiar. When a saint departs from exalting the Word, he will become puffed up, living by worldly wisdom and what 'he' values/feels.



The Corinthians were instructed not to elevate teachers, not even Paul and Apollos; only God is to receive the glory. *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (I Cor. 3:5-6)* Paul and Apollos were used as examples in I Corinthians, *"...that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." (I Cor. 4:6)*

Insight: A saint can be a victim to his own thoughts/priorities, preventing godliness and maturity. Anyone can recover out of the snare of the devil, but our flesh is strong and wily; sometimes we're unaware. i.e. We can be religious, attend Bible services, and talk about the doctrines of grace, but subtly have 'a double life' of carnality, living unto ourselves. The answer is to trust God and keep Scripture in our mind each day. Change doesn't happen quickly, nor automatically. Prevention is developing wise, godly habits ahead of time, keeping a heart of faith.



Distractions, Be Gone!

What Is Reigning... Your Flesh Or Christ In You?

Whatever we truly think and believe in our heart, we will yield to, taking us down a road affecting decisions and behavior. Matthew 12:34 teaches this principle, *"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."* (Basically, we reap what we sow. Gal. 6:7-9)

Romans 6 uncovers that our new identity is closely linked to Christ's death, burial, & resurrection. As we understand, believe, and yield to who we are in Christ from sound doctrine, we will reap life and godliness: *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Romans 6:11)



Allowing sin to reign, by indulging fleshly thoughts and behavior, as did the Corinthians, empowers our flesh to powerfully rule: *"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."* (Romans 6:12)

What we exalt as important, is what we will yield to, and it will reign. *"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."* (Romans 6:13)

God wanted the Corinthians, as well as all saints, to live by faith. Yielding to His power and wisdom, allows grace to reign by Christ's resurrection life in them: *"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 5:21)

Food For Thought: Many believers are ever looking for God's power to be demonstrated in their life. Though it may not be what's expected, the greatest power in the universe has been deposited within each believer. The indwelling Spirit and Christ, the Living Word, enable a saint to live godly. Yielding allows the Lord Jesus Christ to reign in **any situation**, especially sufferings. Christ's magnificent light shines in and through these imperfect, earthen vessels to affect us, and those we touch. (II Cor. 4)

Oh, How Marvelous Is God's Power!

Wouldn't it be nice if all your distractions disappeared at your word? Oh, they will be gone once you go on to glory. Until then, you need to learn how to deal with things that distract you from your heavenly purpose and hope.

As you set your affection above, reflect on who you are in Christ, resting in what God provides! *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."* (Colossians 3:1)

Do you know what shifts your attention from above? Are you *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (II Cor.10:5)? **Saints are easily distracted!**

Pulls come from all directions, yanking a saint off course and using up time/resources, often unknowingly. (i.e. A carnal past, habits, mistakes, health & mental issues, emotions, things of the world, ungodly influences, family, relationships, finances, jobs, religious & leisure activities, & endless 'to dos'.)

First, awareness is needed. How are you swept up in the cares of the world? Second, pray and meditate on the issue, allowing God to stir up the doctrine within, by the Spirit, to find a wise answer to practically help you. Try this activity to become more self-aware:

Spiritual Warm-Up: As you eat breakfast this week, for 3-5 minutes, think and pray to God, quietly in your mind. If it helps, do it regularly!

- 1) Thank God for all He provides and pray to be more aware of what is going on in your mind thru the day.
- 2) Determine what interferes with seeing yourself forgiven/accepted/under grace. Make a change. i.e. If you condemn yourself or have negative self-talk, each time you do it, yield to God to get off that road of thinking.
- 3) Name one thing that diverts you from your hope & purpose. Decide to yield & change, removing or reducing this distraction today, to more fully live unto God.

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." II Timothy 2:1

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Stamp

To:

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:24)

What is a New Year’s Resolution?

Traditionally, this resolution is a firm promise made to yourself to make a change and maintain it for the year. Often, it’s based on human effort, trying hard to make it happen. When you give up, it feels like a failure; Why? It’s putting yourself under ‘your law.’

This year, give yourself grace! Do make changes as you look to the future, but allow Christ to do it in you. If you make a mistake, forget, or regress, forgive yourself and just continue your goal! Yield unto God and be ‘led by the Spirit;’ then the power is Christ!

Keep This Weekend Open To Join Us This Year:

Annual Ladies Florida Retreat

Fellowship Bible Church, Orlando, FL

April 13-14, 2018

Topic: Grace-How To Really Live It (Rom. 14-16)

Contact Sue for details: (804) 690-6789

(Applying Godly Truths)

Christian Life Coach Support Services

Coaches/Writers/Editors: Brian/Deborah Johnson

It’s Not Too Late...Join Us Today

Read The Bible With Us!



The goal will be to read a little each day, progressing **at your own pace**. Start any time; it is all grace. If you want to finish in a year, a Daily Reading Schedule is available. Those who would like to join us, have questions, or would like help to stay on track, call: **Brian/Deborah: (804) 519-1210**



‘On A Personal Side’

We welcome feedback & questions.

From Our Readers

“I enjoy reading your monthly newsletter!” (email)

“Your ‘Growing up In Christ’ book is easy to read and very non-threatening. It is beautifully simple, and explains why we should start to read in the book of Romans. I like the study pages at the end of the chapters too! (California)

“I’m still reading your October newsletter and I am thoroughly enjoying it!” (Illinois)

About Our Grace Ministry: Contact Brian or Deborah Johnson if you are interested in any of these opportunities, have questions, or need assistance. The Word of God is our only authority!

Life Coaching (Applying Pauline Truth)

Coaching is a helping service, which includes Bible instruction, mentoring, support, and applying Scripture to life situations for personal growth. Options: In-person/phone/skype, Coaching and teaching: individuals, couples, and groups (support groups/retreats/presentations).

Home Church-Bible Study: Join our ‘Grace’ ministry in the Richmond Area. Call (804) 519-1210.

Friday Family Bible Study/Church: 7-9 pm

Wednesday Ladies Study: 10:30-12 pm at Library

Newsletter

Just A Minute: Monthly Grace news bulletin provides Bible study, edification, and life application.

Books

- What to Appreciate As We Approach God’s Word
- How the Bible is Practical and Able to Mature Believers
- Growing Up In Christ To Become A Mature Believer

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