



Session 3

4:1-21

**Why do you think our culture loves celebrities and praises powerful people?
How have you seen celebrity culture creep into the church today?**

Celebrities have become an important part of our culture—they represent our favorite movies, songs, television shows, and sports teams. Unfortunately, celebrity culture had crept into the church at Corinth, and it's still an issue in the church today. In this passage, Paul will walk us through how we can live counter-culturally despite the pressure to be self-centered.

1. The Consumeristic Mindset of Corinth

Paul spends time comparing the Corinthians with himself and other servants of God. The Corinthians had a consumeristic mindset that bled into the way they viewed everything including church leadership.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-13.

What does Paul say in the main issue in verse 6? What is the purpose he gives?

The Corinthians lived in a consumeristic culture. The location of Corinth was ideal for involvement with the local trading of goods, and the city was known for its wealth, prostitutes, sexual vices, and idolatry.

What similarities can you see between the city of Corinth and our western culture?

Just like the Corinthians, we can allow the normalcy of consumerism to bleed into our spiritual lives. **What are some problems that could arise if we allow consumerism to take priority in our lives?**

Corinth treated Paul and other leaders as options they could fight over. Their mindset only hindered them from being able to pay attention to the important aspects of life—Jesus and His Church. Paul's desire was for them to focus on the things that mattered.

What steps can we take to keep an eternal perspective when we're tempted to solely focus on the present? Why is an eternal perspective so crucial for our spiritual journey?

It can be easy for us to focus on trivial things when we're not seeing our lives with the right viewpoint. **When have you struggled to see things clearly due to a misaligned focus? What could it look like to focus on Christ in your life this week?**

2. Darkness vs. Light

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul wants to remind the Corinthians that he and any other church leaders are faithful servants of Christ. He says their judgments about him do not bother him.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.

In 1 Corinthians 4:5, what does Paul say God will do in verse 1 Corinthians 4:5? What is the result of God bringing darkness to light?

The goal of God revealing the intention of our hearts is so that the truth can be displayed. While others may judge us, God rightly judges our hearts because he knows the truth. **When have you been judged by someone unfairly? How does it feel knowing that God understands the truth of that situation, no matter how much someone judged you negatively?**

Paul emphasizes the fact that there is no need for premature judgment because God brings what lies in the dark into the light in order reveal the intention of our hearts. **What is God revealing about your heart's motives and intentions? What steps could you take this week to be vulnerable with God about your heart?**

3. Pride

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-13.

In these verses, Paul is tired of the Corinthians' pride and arrogance that has made a toxic environment within their church. Everything they had was given to them, while Paul and other servants of God were enduring certain hardships for the sake of the gospel. He describes himself as poorly clothed, hungry, homeless, yet able to endure persecution with grace while blessing those who revile him.

Think about all the words Paul used to describe his situation. **When have you had to endure difficulty? What was the outcome? In what ways did that situation humble you?**

First Corinthians 4:6-13 shows us what humility looks like—rejecting prideful attitudes and enduring uncomfortable situations for the sake of the gospel. **What do you think of when you hear the word humility? What comes to mind when you think of the word pride?**

In what ways can a prideful and arrogant heart keep someone from experiencing a content heart the way Paul did?

Our gifts and our talents come from God. We owe everything to Him. But pride tells us we've earned everything on our own. In response to the Corinthians' pride, Paul asks, "Why do you boast as if you didn't receive it in the first place?" **What would be your own answer to his question?**

How can a boastful attitude affect our understanding of God's sovereignty?

In what areas of life are you most tempted to become prideful? What could it look like to turn that pride over to God this week?

4. Three People Who Suffered for the Gospel

Read 1 Corinthians 4:8-13.

Paul gives us a good picture of what it was like to be in his position as a traveling leader in verses 10-13. If most of us were honest, we wouldn't choose his position over where we are. There are other leaders who suffered through uncomfortable and humble circumstances for the benefit of the church. Let's take a look at a few.

Reread 1 Corinthians 4:10-13.

How does Paul describe his life in comparison to the life of the Corinthians in these verses? How does he react to life's difficult circumstances?

Read 1 Timothy 4:12.

What type of criticism was Timothy facing? What was he asked to do in spite of the way others viewed him?

Read Mark 6:14-28.

Why was John the Baptist ultimately beheaded? How did living for Christ and boldly declaring what was right bring him suffering?

When have you or anyone you know suffered for the gospel? What did you learn from that situation? What helps you endure suffering?

How does Paul's physical sacrifice influence your perspective on serving others? What can we learn from Paul's actions and attitude? How can you make a personal sacrifice this week by serving someone at work, in your family, or at church?

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The lives of Paul, Timothy, and John the Baptist are a few examples of what it means to suffer for Jesus. But when it's all done for the sake of spreading the gospel, it is a small price to pay.