

Studies in 1 Corinthians

► LESSON XII: *Putting Faith in the Right Things*

Text: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23; 4:1-7 (NLT)

18 Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. **19** For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say,

“He traps the wise in the snare of their own cleverness.”^[a]

20 And again,

“The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise; he knows they are worthless.”^[b]

21 So don't boast about following a particular human leader. For everything belongs to you—**22** whether Paul or Apollos or Peter,^[c] or the world, or life and death, or the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, **23** and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

(Chapter 4) **1** So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's mysteries. **2** Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. **3** 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. **4** My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

5 So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

6 Dear brothers and sisters,^[d] I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures,^[e] you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. **7** For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?

Footnotes:

a. 1 Corinthians 3:19: Job 5:13.

b. 1 Corinthians 3:20: Ps 94:11.

c. 1 Corinthians 3:22: Greek *Cephas*.

d. 1 Corinthians 3:1: Greek *Brothers*.

e. 1 Corinthians 4:6: Or *If you learn not to go beyond "what is written."*

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. In what way do people deceive themselves, according to verses 18-20?
2. It is said that the men of Issachar “**understood the times** and knew what Israel should do” (1 Cor. 12:32). How can we be men and women who rise as moral and spiritual leaders in this generation? (Look again verses 18-20)
3. In Verse 22, what is Paul referring to when he says “everything belongs to you” (“all things are yours” NIV)?
4. Explain in your own words what Verses 22-23 mean to you today.
5. Paul says in chapter 4, verse 1: “So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God’s mysteries.” Why is this a healthy way of looking at our spiritual leaders?
6. Paul says that he has been charged with explaining the “mysteries of God.” (“the secret things of God” NIV). What is he talking about? (See Ephesians 1:9; 6:19; Colossians 2:2; 1 Timothy 3:16)
7. Read verse 2 again. What responsibilities has God given you? How can you be faithful to them? What is at stake if you don’t?
8. What’s Paul getting at in verses 3-7 when he talks about judging and being judged? What lessons can we glean from these verses?