

FOOLS FOR CHRIST

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 4 · MAY 5, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"We are fools for Christ." (1 Corinthians 4:10)

Living with God and Entrusting Ourselves to God (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

The calling and identity of Paul and the apostles
Not being controlled by others' opinions
But not thinking too highly of oneself
The opinion, and judgment, of God

➔ *Living with God set us free from others' opinions*

Living as Christ's Fools in an Upside Down (1 Corinthians 4:6-13)

The Corinthians' perception problem, both of themselves and others
The Corinthians' sense of having already "arrived"
Paul and the apostles' confusing resume in an upside-down world

➔ *Living with God sets us free to live by a different measure*

Living with God for Others' Goodness (1 Corinthians 4:14-21)

Paul more than an instructor but a father to the Corinthians
Paul's pattern of living, Timothy, and the Corinthians
The gospel beyond speech and the gospel's efficacy or power

➔ *Living with God enables us to bring blessing to others*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When have you ever felt foolish in your life? What happened? How did you deal with it?
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church: 1 Corinthians" by looking at 1 Corinthians 4:1-21. Whether you are on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study, and then read that text aloud.
3. Paul begins this part of the letter by exploring his status as an apostle and the opinions

- of others. What does Paul say in verses 1-2 about who he and the other apostles are?
4. In verses 3-5, how does Paul compare or contrast, as well as respond to, the Corinthians' opinion of him and God's opinion (or judgment) of him?
5. How might Paul's words help us deal with others' opinions of us?
6. The Corinthians developed an inflated sense of themselves by merging Stoic philosophy with a misunderstanding of the message of Jesus. They believed they had already "arrived," but Paul is helping to correct them. When you look at verses 6-13, how would you say Paul is trying to reframe their understanding of themselves and the apostles?
7. Why would you say it's hard to see ourselves accurately? How does our faith shape our self-understanding and our ability to see others accurately?
8. In verses 14-17, Paul describes himself as a father to the Corinthians, offering an example in his own life and the life of Timothy (who likely carries this letter to Corinth). What stands out to you about Paul's description of his care for these early Christians?
9. Who would you describe as a spiritual "father" or "mother" in your life? What do they mean to you?
10. What do you think it looks like to become a spiritual "father" or "mother" to someone else?
11. Paul concludes with mention of his impending visit. What do you think Paul means in verse 20?
12. What is God speaking to you through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone during the next few days.

DIG DEEPER

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize 1 Corinthians 4:20
- This week, consider reaching out to someone who is or has been a spiritual "father" or "mother" to you in order to thank them for their role in your life.
- Pray about who God might want you to step forward with to be a sort of spiritual "parent" to them. Perhaps reach out for a conversation with them.
- Explore these resources:
 - Timothy Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness: The Path to True Christian Joy*
 - D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians*