



# Be A Good Servant & Steward Of God's Blessings



- In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul presented three pictures of the local church. Now he presents three pictures of the minister—a steward (*1 Cor. 4:1–6*), a spectacle (*1 Cor. 4:7–13*), and a father (*1 Cor. 4:14–21*).
- He wanted his readers to understand how God measured and evaluated a Christian’s service.
- First Corinthians 4:6 explains Paul’s purpose: “That none of you be puffed up against one another.”

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- We must avoid extremes when it comes to evaluating other's ministries. On the one hand, we can be so indifferent that we accept anybody who comes along, but the other extreme is to be so hypercritical.
- It is important that we “try the spirits” (*1 John 4:1–6; and note 2 John*), but we must be careful not to grieve the Spirit as we do so.
- In these three pictures of ministry, Paul presented three characteristics of a true minister of Jesus Christ.



# 1 Corinthians 4:1–6 (NKJV)

1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

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5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

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# Servants

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- “Let a man regard us as Christ’s servants.”
- This word for “servant” is derived not from diakonos but rather from hypēretai (*servants under their master*).
- The word originally described the slaves who rowed below a ship’s deck. In the first century, the term took on a broader meaning and signified a domestic worker.

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- “We are not the captains of the ship,” said Paul, “but only the galley slaves who are under orders. Now, is one slave greater than another?”
- Then Paul explained the image of the steward. A steward is a servant who manages everything for his master, but who himself owns nothing.
- Joseph was a chief steward in Potiphar’s household (*Gen. 39*).

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- The church is the “household of faith”, and the ministers are stewards who share God’s wealth with the family.

## Galatians 6:10 (NKJV)

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

## Matthew 13:52 (NKJV)

Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

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- Paul called this spiritual wealth “the mysteries of God.”

## 1 Corinthians 2:7–8 (NKJV)

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

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**The responsibility of  
the steward is to be  
faithful to his master.**

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- A steward may not please the members of the household; he may not even please some of the other servants; but if he pleases his own master, he is a good steward.

## Romans 14:4 (NKJV)

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

- So, the main issue is not, “Is Paul popular?” or, “Is Apollos a better preacher than Paul?” The main issue is, “Have Paul, Apollos, and Peter been faithful to do the work God assigned to them?”

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**Jesus had this same  
test in mind when He  
told the parable.**

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## Luke 12:41–48 (NKJV)

41 Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?”

42 And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?”

43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

45 But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk,

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46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

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# Be Faithful

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- If a servant of God is faithful in his personal life, in his home, and in his ministry of the Word, then he is a good steward and will be adequately rewarded, but a servant is constantly being judged.
- There is always somebody criticizing something he does.
- Paul pointed out that there are three judgments in the life of the steward.

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# There Is Man's Judgment (v. 3a)

- Paul did not get upset when people criticized him, for he knew that his Master's judgment was far more important.
- The phrase man's judgment is literally "man's day."
- A very small thing. Lit., unto a very small thing: it amounts to very little.

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# 1 Corinthians 2:14–16 (NKJV)

14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

16 For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

- We cannot focus too much on what people say about us.

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# There Is The Servant's Own Self-Judgment (vv. 3b–4a)

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## 1 Corinthians 4:3–4 (NKJV)

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

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# There Is The Servant's Own Self-Judgment (vv. 3b–4a)

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- Paul knew nothing that was inappropriate in his life and ministry, but even that did not excuse him.

## 1 John 1:8–10 (NKJV)

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

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# There Is The Servant's Own Self-Judgment (vv. 3b–4a)

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- Sometimes we do not really know ourselves.

## James 1:26 (NKJV)

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

- There can be a fine line between a clear conscience and a self-righteous attitude, so we must beware.

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# The Most Important Judgment Is God's Judgment (v. 4b)

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## 1 Corinthians 4:4 (NKJV)

For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

- Certainly, God judges us today through His Word and by the ministry of the Spirit.

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# The Most Important Judgment Is God's Judgment (v. 4b)

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## Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

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# The Most Important Judgment Is God's Judgment (v. 4b)

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- Sometimes He uses the ministry of a loving friend to help us face and confess sin.

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# The Most Important Judgment Is God's Judgment (v. 4b)

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## Matthew 18:15–17 (NKJV)

15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

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**The primary reference  
here is to the final  
evaluation when each  
Christian stands at the  
Judgment Seat of Christ.**

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## **Romans 14:10** (NKJV)

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

## **2 Corinthians 5:10** (NKJV)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- Then the true facts will be revealed and the faithful servants rewarded.

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- These verses must not be used to cultivate a self-righteous independence of people.
- The local church is a family, and members of the family must help each other to grow.
- There is a place for honest, loving criticism.
- If the critic is right, then he has helped us. If he is wrong, then we can help him. Either way, the truth is strengthened.
- Paul's "therefore" in 1 Corinthians 4:5 alerts us that he is about to make a personal application of the truths just discussed.
- He closed this section with a threefold rebuke.

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# 1<sup>st</sup>

## “You Are Judging God’s Servants At The Wrong Time”<sup>(v. 5)</sup>

- It is when the Lord returns that He will evaluate their lives and ministries, so wait until then.
- In fact, you cannot see into men’s hearts; you cannot begin to judge their motives. Only God can do that.

### 1 Samuel 16:7 (NKJV)

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

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- The Corinthians who were passing judgment on Paul were actually “playing God” and assuming to themselves the privileges that only God has.

## **James 4:11–12** (NKJV)

11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

- How often have we made this mistake!
- How easy it is to misread a situation and misjudge a person.

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# 2<sup>nd</sup> “You Are Judging By The Wrong Standard” (v. 6a)

## 1 Corinthians 4:6 (NKJV)

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

- The Corinthians were measuring different men by their own personal preferences and prejudices.
- They were even comparing ministers with one another. The only true basis for evaluation is “that which is written”—the Word of God.

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- The Bible clearly reveals what kind of life and service is required of God's ministers.
- There is no need for us to devise new standards. Often I receive letters from churches seeking pastors, asking if I could recommend candidates to them.
- Too often their "requirements" have gone beyond what God requires in His Word.
- References are 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-9.

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# 3<sup>rd</sup>

## “You Are Judging With The Wrong Motive” (v. 6b)

### 1 Corinthians 4:6 (NKJV)

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

- Each group in the church was tearing down the other ministers in order to build up the man they liked.

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**3<sup>rd</sup>**

# “You Are Judging With The Wrong Motive” (v. 6b)

- Their motive was not at all spiritual.

## **2 Timothy 4:3–5** (NKJV)

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

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# 3<sup>rd</sup>

## “You Are Judging With The Wrong Motive” (v. 6b)

- They were promoting division in the church by being partisan to one man as opposed to the others.
- They needed to examine their own hearts and get rid of the pride that was destroying the church.

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- God's servants are stewards of His truth, and the key test is: Have they been faithful to obey and to teach the Word of God?
- Not just faithful preaching, but faithful practicing as well.

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and steward of  
God's blessings.**

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