# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 4: A Disciple Serves Humbly

Main Idea: Built different: disciples humbly serve others rather than pridefully seeking recognition.

Discipleship Rhythm: Serve the Community

1 Corinthians 4:1–21

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." (1 Corinthians 1:10).

## **OBSERVATION:** WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people and discuss the Observation and Interpretation sections.

Observation Exercise 1: Servants and stewards

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1–5. What label did Paul use to describe himself and the other apostles? What is required of those who have been entrusted with a responsibility?

*Suggested Response: Paul said they should be regarded as servants. He taught that we must prove ourselves faithful when God trusts us with kingdom responsibilities.*

Observation Exercise 2: Already reigning vs. publicly dishonored

Read 1 Corinthians 4:8–13. Make a list of the contrasts between apostles and the Corinthians.

*Suggested Response: Paul said the Corinthians were acting as though they already had all they wanted, had become rich, and had begun to reign. He contrasted this with the apostles, who were displayed like those condemned to die. Paul said the Corinthians were wise, strong, and honored, while the apostles were fools for Christ, weak, and dishonored. He also described the apostles as hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, brutally treated, homeless, hard-*

*working, cursed, persecuted, slandered, and treated as the scum of the earth.*

Observation Exercise 3: A fatherly warning

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14–21. If Paul and the Corinthians were a family, what roles did Paul use to describe the relationship? What did he urge them to do?

*Suggested Response: Paul described himself as their father. He said they should imitate him. He said he was not writing to shame them but to warn them as his dear children. He told them he was sending Timothy to remind them of his way of life in Christ Jesus. Paul also warned that he would come to them, if the Lord willed, and would find out not only how arrogant people were talking but what power they had.*

## **INTERPRETATION:** WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Interpretation Exercise 1: Faithfulness

What does it mean to be a steward of something? Why is it important to know who is measuring success, or faithfulness?

*Suggested Response: A steward manages things that belong to someone else. Knowing the work belongs to God means the final evaluation also belongs to God. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that Christian ministry is not ownership, performance, or personal platform. People may misunderstand, praise, criticize, or compare, but the Lord is the One who sees clearly, judges rightly, and knows the motives of the heart.*

Interpretation Exercise 2: The true measure of success

Why did Paul contrast the Corinthians as rich, wise, strong, and honored with the apostles as weak, foolish, dishonored, and mistreated?

*Suggested Response: Paul used irony to expose how wrongly the Corinthians were measuring spiritual maturity. They thought their confidence, status, and giftedness proved they were spiritually advanced, but their pride showed they were blind. The apostles looked unimpressive in the eyes of the world, yet their suffering, humility, endurance, and service displayed the way of Christ. Paul was showing that true maturity is not measured by recognition or comfort, but by faithful service that follows the pattern of Jesus.*

Interpretation Exercise 3: Talk versus kingdom power

*What is the difference between arrogant talk and delivering results?*

*Suggested Response: Arrogant talk may sound confident, impressive, or spiritually mature, but it does not prove someone can deliver results. The power to achieve a life of substantial influence is received from God. The power of the kingdom shows up in a life changed by God: humility, faithfulness, endurance, love, obedience, and service. Paul wanted the Corinthians to see that true spiritual maturity is not measured by how strong someone sounds but by whether God's power is actually transforming their life.*

## **APPLICATION:** HOW DO I RESPOND?

Question 1: Why is it hard to be humble rather than promote yourself?

*Suggested Response: Every person has a desire to be known and valuable. God designed us this way. This good desire is counterfeited by Satan. Where God fulfills this desire through a relationship with Himself, Satan lies to us, saying we can fulfill this desire in ourselves by elevating ourselves before others.*

Question 2: Paul said servants and stewards must be faithful with what is entrusted to them. What has God placed in your life that He asks you to steward faithfully? Are you a faithful steward?

*Suggested Response: God gifts us and asks us to be faithful stewards with family, work, relationships, resources, spiritual gifts, or platforms of influence. Encourage your group to specifically (not just a general category) identify something in their life and speak it out loud.*

*These things are not random or accidental. They are areas of our lives where God wants to use us to bless others. Being faithful means leveraging the gift from God for the good of others, not for elevating ourselves. As your group responds, use follow-up questions to guide below surface-level responses. Encourage transparent responses.*

Question 3: Paul taught that God sees our motives, not just our actions. What difference does this make in your life?

*Suggested Response: This can be both sobering and comforting. It is sobering because I cannot hide pride, selfishness, or the desire to be noticed from God. It is comforting because God also sees faithfulness that others miss, sacrifices that go unnoticed, and service that may never be publicly recognized.*

Question 4: What are some things in your life that are easy to treat as achievements instead of gifts?

*Suggested Response: I may treat my abilities, opportunities, family, work ethic, knowledge, personality, resources, platform of influence, or spiritual growth as*

*though they came from me because of my hard work or strategic activity. Paul's question reminds me that everything good has been received from God, which should lead to humble gratitude instead of pride.*

Question 5: In 1 Corinthians 4:8, Paul confronted the Corinthians for acting as though they were already full, rich, and reigning. Where are you tempted to act as though you have already arrived spiritually?

*Suggested Response: I may act this way when I resist correction, assume I already understand, compare myself favorably to others, or become more aware of other people's immaturity than my own. Paul's warning reminds me that confidence is not the same as maturity. Oftentimes, my own area of giftedness is where I act as though I have arrived through my own wisdom or efforts.*

Question 6: How can you use the gifts God has given to you to serve others? What barrier do you face to serving others with this gift?

*Suggested Response: Help your group process the gifts identified in questions 2 and 4 as opportunities to serve and bless others.*

*I may struggle to serve when it takes extra time, interrupts my plans, goes unnoticed, involves people who are difficult, or does not feel meaningful. Serving the community often requires more than good intentions. It means moving toward real needs with humility, patience, and faithfulness, even when the work is inconvenient or unseen.*

*Common categories of barriers are: I don't have enough time; I go to service and am in this Life Group so my time slots are full; I have a family to take care of; my work schedule is full; I'm not sure where to start; I don't know what opportunities there are; etc.*

Question 7: What is one practical step you can take this week to serve someone with humility?

*Suggested Response: I can look for a specific need in my home, workplace, neighborhood, church, or group and move to meet it without waiting to be asked or noticed. This may mean encouraging someone, meeting a practical need, giving my time, listening patiently, helping behind the scenes, or serving someone who cannot repay me.*

Question 8: How can our group serve together regularly? How can we invite someone who is not serving to join us in serving?

*** Suggested Response ** Ask your group's Serve Coordinator to connect with the campus Missions Manager or Operations Pastor to have some serving opportunities identified before your group gathers. Plan the serving*

*opportunity and call your group to it. You are encouraged to plan and prepare in advance so the group does not spend the time deliberating possibilities. Rather, take action together. Not everyone will be able to join, and that is okay.*