

1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 4

The Gospel and Self-Esteem

1 Corinthians 3:18 - 4:21

1 Corinthians 3:18-23

“18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”; 20 and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” 21 Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. 23 And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

Background

1. **What is your understanding of the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom?**
2. **If we rely on worldly wisdom, we can only build our self esteem on ourselves. What is the basis of our self esteem based on the world today? (This is an open ended question - many different acceptable answers)**
3. **v. 18 says “If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.” What does it mean to “become a fool”? Does it mean we should forsake knowledge and wisdom we learn?**
4. **a) Based on v. 21, what would worldly wisdom lead to? Summarise in one word.**

b) Based on v. 21, the antidote is in the phrase “for all things are yours”. What does this phrase mean? Reference:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/all-things-are-yours> (Mandatory: Refer to this link in your discussion - under the “Looking at the Lightning” section)

c) If Paul / Apollos / Cephas / this world / life / death / present / future are ours, what are the implications? Do we need to strive to have something more than what God has given to us?

1 Corinthians 4:1-7

“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. 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. 7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

5. a) We are servants and stewards of Christ. What do the Greek words mean?

b) Being “under rowers”, does our service need to be seen?

c) Being “house managers” of the Gospel, what would be counted as good stewardship?

6. a) What is the effect on our self-esteem if we based ourselves on the judgment of other people?

b) What is the effect on our self-esteem if we based ourselves on our self judgment?

c) What is the effect on our self-esteem if we based ourselves on the judgment of the Lord?

7. As a Christian, what should our self-esteem lead to?

- A. Boasting
- B. Feel better about ourselves
- C. A means to live for God
- D. Confidence in meeting others
- E. A means to live for others
- F. A means to live for self
- G. Lead us more into ourselves
- H. Lead us more outside ourselves
- I. To serve God and others

8. a) As a saved believer, should we connect our sin to our self worth or our identity? Why or why not?

b) What is our self worth / identity based on?

9. Should we boast in our spiritual gifts? Why or why not?

1 Corinthians 4:8-13

“8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you! 9 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! 11 To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. 12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.”

10. Paul sarcastically tells the Corinthians what they have. What was he rebuking the Corinthians about?

1 Corinthians 4:14-21

“14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. 15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me. 17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. 20 For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. 21 What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?”

11. In verses 14-21 what metaphor is Paul employing and to what end? Can you tell us why he is using this particular metaphor? How does Paul admonish the Corinthians?

Takeaway

- A. Worldly wisdom is futile and we should not build our self esteem on it
- B. We should have the Humility to know that God's wisdom is greater than the world's wisdom
- C. We should not boast in men, but only in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31)
- D. There is no need to strive to prove ourselves "for all things are ours"
- E. Our self-esteem should be based on the Lord's judgment, not others or self-judgment
- F. Our self-esteem should lead us to serve God and serve others (outside ourselves)

Case Study

Case 1 – Self-Esteem?

[The following excerpt is false teaching - consider the reason why.]

Robert Schuller writes:

"The core of original sin, then is "LOT": Lack Of Trust. Or, it could be considered an innate inability to adequately value ourselves. Label it a "negative self-image," but do not say that the central core of the human soul is wickedness... positive Christianity does not hold to human depravity, but to human inability. I am humanly unable to correct my negative self-image until I encounter a life-changing experience with non-judgmental love bestowed

upon me by a Person whom I admire so much that to be unconditionally accepted by him is to be born again.”

(Robert Schuller, Self-Esteem: The New Reformation (Waco Texas: Word Books, 1982).

Summary: The only thing wrong with us is our inability to correctly value ourselves, not that we are wicked.

1. What does it imply about our own intrinsic self-worth?

2. Is there a difference between self-worth and self-esteem?

3. Can you examine the Bible and see if this view is biblical? (Jeremiah 17:9; 1 John 1:8; Romans 3:23)

4. What do you think will happen if we follow what Schuller teaches?