

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*Servant Leadership*  
1 Corinthians 4:1-14, 21

**Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.**

## **Leaders' Responsibilities:**

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## **Prior to this Coming Session:**

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

### **Bible Study Leader:**

Please carefully read your "Teaching Plan". For the best use of your limited time, it is important that you not only read the focal passage in more than one translation during the week before teaching; but to also read **John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28-29, 38; 12:49**. Decide which of these you need to delete from those to be read by persons in your group. Write the verse references that you choose to use on slips of paper and distribute them to those who will read the verses before the class begins.

Note the suggestion to you, the leader, that you prepare someone to read the focal passage by asking them during the week before the class to read the passage and practice it aloud so that he/she can read it with conviction and good expression during class time.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

Conclude the worship time by giving each participant a copy of the Scripture. Spend a few minutes reviewing the words and then say it all together. Copies may be made from the template at the end of the worship time.

### **Music Sources:**

**Be Strong in the Lord**, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

**Find Us Faithful**, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI # 18259

**Let It Be Said of Us**, *The Worship Hymnal* #597; CCLI # 1855882

**Grace Alone**, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI #2335524

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***Servant Leadership***

### **Focal Text**

1 Corinthians 4:1-14, 21

### **Background Text**

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

### **Main Idea**

The church's work goes forward when church leaders and members fulfill their roles in humility and mutual respect.

### **Question to Explore**

How should church leaders and members relate to one another?

### **Teaching Aim**

To guide the class to identify biblical principles for the proper relationship of church leaders and members.

### **Gathering together:**

Sing two of the songs which were used in the last session

**Find Us Faithful**, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI # 18259

**Grace Alone**, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI #2335524

### **First thoughts:**

You may choose to use a YouTube version of the song **Find Us Faithful** or sing it as a congregation.

As various members of the group to comment on what the words “May all who come behind us find us faithful” mean to them.

The Corinth church had a strong beginning, but had lost their early devotion. The quarrelling and disagreements were diluting their influence. This old story may cause us to reflect on our own experiences. Hopefully, it will cause us to commit to great faithfulness to the calling of God in our life. Learning to be a servant leader is a lifetime endeavor.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *Servant Leadership*

#### **Focal Text**

1 Corinthians 4:1-14, 21

#### **Background Text**

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#### **Main Idea**

The church’s work goes forward when church leaders and members fulfill their roles in humility and mutual respect.

#### **Question to Explore**

How should church leaders and members relate to one another?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To guide the class to identify biblical principles for the proper relationship of church leaders and members.

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

It humbles one to realize that Christian leadership is really servanthood. Pray that as you lead the study you may have a servant spirit.

#### **Background:**

The great example of servant leadership is the Lord Jesus himself. On one occasion he said, “***I am among you as one who serves.***” (Luke 22:27). On another occasion he said, “***The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as***

**a ransom for many.”** (Matthew 20:28). He taught his disciples by example how to be servant leaders. See John 13:12-17.

## **Focusing on the Meaning:**

There is a question in v. 7 that brings all of us to the same level. That question is, “What do you have that you did not receive?” The most gifted person among us received his/her talents and abilities from a source outside himself/herself. We are all equally dependent on something or someone for everything. Our ability to breathe, to eat and digest, to think, to reason, to make decisions, to feel, to see, to hear, to participate in athletics, to play a musical instrument, to sing, to write, to compose – the list could go on – is given to us.

That awareness should lead each of us to deep humility and gratitude. It should make us aware of our responsibility to develop and use all that has been given to us.

Identifying servant leaders: They are people who are humble, aware of their subordinate position to Christ (v. 1). They are ministers (attendants, helpers, subordinates). The word literally means “under rowers” (slaves in the bottom of a ship). Servant leaders are people who recognize that they are caretakers or stewards, not owners (v. 2). They carefully, conscientiously take care of someone else’s things. The bottom line qualification for a caretaker is faithfulness.

People who follow servant leaders will themselves adopt the servant’s attitude (What can I do to make you successful?). They will recognize that everything they have is a gift (v. 7). They will claim nothing more about themselves or others than what they are (v. 6). They will ultimately recognize that servant leadership is the best kind of leadership (vv. 20-21).

1 Corinthians 4:1-6

In contrast to the emphasis the Corinthians have placed on the leaders of various groups – Paul, Peter, Apollos – Paul in these verses emphasizes servanthood.

*“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God”.*

Who is Paul? Who is Peter? Who is Apollos? Who are the Corinthian Christians?

They are servants of Christ and “stewards” of the secret things of God. The word “mysteries” or “secret things of God” as Paul uses it, stands for the salvation of man by the crucifixion of Christ. This was God’s great plan of the ages, disclosed in the fullness of time. Paul’s function, as was that of Peter and Apollos and all other Christians, was to be responsible for watching over God’s affairs here on earth as they related to salvation.

That function, in ordinary, everyday life requires a high level of faithfulness. The word steward, used in early translations, is one seldom used today. But it is important for our understanding of Paul's teaching.

The steward was in charge of the whole administration of the house or the estate; he controlled the staff; he issued the supplies and the rations; he ran the whole household; but, however much he controlled the household staff of slaves, he himself was still a slave where the master was concerned. The wise steward was a tremendous help to the master. The steward's task was constant, ever-vigilant, and very important. But it was always a secondary role; he functioned at the master's command.

Paul in verses 3-5 considers judgement. There is the judgment of fellow men. Paul indicates that he cares little for that judgment. He says that because he feels confident that his stewardship has been honest. He can report to his master with a clear conscience; he has nothing to hide. A second judgment all people must make is the judgment of self. Paul disregards this. He knew that our self-judgment is often clouded by self-satisfaction, by self-righteousness, by pride and conceit. Humankind is adept at excusing our bad behaviour.

Whatever may be the judgment given by others or by oneself, ultimately judgement will be made by God. *"He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts."* Political candidates today understand that any past indiscretion – large or small – will become known and social media as well as more tradition media sources will make it known on a widespread basis. Beyond that, however, is the light of God which examines motives which might pass even the ruthless scrutiny of popular media.

The teaching of these verses is clear – we are servants and stewards and absolute faithfulness is required.

1 Corinthians 4:7-13

Paul asks *"What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, what do you boast as though you did not?"* The beautiful song **Grace Alone** by Scott Wesley Brown and Jeff Nelson captures this idea. "Ev'ry promise we can make, ev'ry prayer and step of faith, Ev'ry diff'rence we will make is only by His grace." Paul reminds the Corinthians and he reminds us that whatever abilities, talents, or achievements we may have to our credit is something we have received by God's goodness.

Paul then speaks with irony. He compares the pride, self-satisfaction and the feeling of superiority of the Corinthians with the life an apostle lives. To the Corinthians the Christian life meant flaunting their pride and their privileges and reckoning up their achievements; to Paul it meant a humble service, ready to die for Christ.

1 Corinthians 4: 14-21



Paul returns to a more gentle entreaty. *“I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. He reminds them of his relationship to them as father “for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel”.*

Anyone who has nurtured another person in their spiritual growth knows the great pain that comes when that one so carefully disciplined fails to live up to the promise of early days. This is the anguish Paul expresses here.

Paul urges his followers to imitate him. We might judge this as prideful but in fact it should be the measure which applies to all Christians. Our lives should be so transparently committed to Christ that we have no hesitancy about having another person imitate us.

Paul ends this section asking whether his corrections will be received well so that he may treat them with love and a gentle spirit. He does not wish to come “with a whip”.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

#### **For Personal Reflection:**

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***Servant Leadership***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the **Focal Text** in their Bibles. Also, share with them the **Main Idea** to be learned from the Scriptures, and the **Questions to be Explored** by the group.

#### **Focal Text**

1 Corinthians 4:1-14, 21

#### **Background Text**

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

#### **Main Idea**

The church's work goes forward when church leaders and members fulfill their roles in humility and mutual respect.

#### **Question to Explore**

How should church leaders and members relate to one another?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To guide the class to identify biblical principles for the proper relationship of church leaders and members.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Tell the group: All of us are followers and all of us are leaders. This is true of us whether we are aware of it or not.

Often we consciously follow other people – parents, teachers, public officials, supervisors, pastors, famous media and other personalities, etc. At other times we follow unconsciously – fashion trends, peer pressure, the desire to be accepted, etc.

Some of us work in leadership positions. We know we are responsible and accountable to provide good leadership. All of us lead by example. By the way we live we lead other people to follow, whether that is our intention or not.

In our lives and our occupations, some of us are in leadership positions. We know we are responsible and accountable to provide good leadership. All of us lead by example. By the way we live we are leading other people to follow, whether that is our intention or not.

## **Guide the Study:**

Read or have a good reader from the group read the whole passage: 1 Corinthians 4:1-14 plus v.21. **Note: During the week before, you might wish to ask that person to read over the passage so that they are comfortable reading it with good expression.**

Say: Our home church functions under the concept of shared leadership. We do not have a person elected to be “in charge” of the church. All of us who are considered members of the church share in the responsibilities and work of the church. We do not have positions that are seen as “offices”. Nor do we believe that is a concept taught in the New Testament. As God gifts each of us spiritually, we take on the tasks of leading, teaching, deciding, and serving as needed. This demands a clear understanding of the Biblical teaching of servant leadership. And this is precisely what we will define and study in today’s session.

Explain that as leaders we have an obligation to provide the best kind of leadership.

Explain that as followers we are obligated to choose the right kind of leadership.

Introduce Jesus as our great example of a leader. Ask someone to read: Matthew 20:28 and Luke 22:27.

Explain that Jesus was a leader based on the concept of the attitude and actions of a servant – not as a dictator nor a corporate executive. From this example and teaching by Jesus, we have derived a new term: “servant leader”.

Introduce Jesus as our great example of a follower.

Have various persons read John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28-29, 38; 12:49.

**(Note to teacher: You will want to read these verses during the week before the class and decide if it is best to delete some of these verses if you think you will be short of time).**

Explain how Jesus listened and observed carefully to understand what the Father was saying and doing. That became his example to follow. Explain that we can be the

same kind of followers. We can listen and observe and then participate with God in what He is doing.

Ask someone to read v 1.

Define the word translated “servants”. Ask the people what that means to them as they think about being that kind of leader.

Encourage them to share the mental pictures that come to mind as they think about “under rowers” and being “under rowers” in the fellowship of believers.

Explain that we are caretakers and now owners of spiritual things.

Ask: What does a caretaker do? Give opportunity for people to share. Explain that such is to be our attitude.

Say: A caretaker may simply have a job for which they are paid for taking care of someone or something for a certain number of hours a day or week. Other caretakers do the work out of love or dedication. Their task consumes all of their time, mental and physical effort, and everything they have.

In your own words tell the story that Jesus told about a land owner who went away for awhile and left his servants in charge (Matthew 25:14-30). **Note to teacher: During the week before class, you might ask someone in the group to prepare to briefly tell this story in their own words.**

Remind the class to: Notice how the land owner commended his “faithful” servants.

Ask someone to reread 1 Corinthians 4:2.

Explain that all of us can be faithful to do what God assigns us to do. State: Someone said, “The greatest ability is dependability.” Encourage the group to be dependable. Explain that as each of us is faithful all the work of Christ will be done.

Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 4:5.

Say: We are not to pass judgment on the work of others nor are we to be motivated by how others judge us. Notice that God is concerned about the motives of our hearts.

Ask the group to list out loud some improper motives. Give opportunity for response.

Ask them to list some proper motives. Give people opportunity to respond.

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

### **Encourage Application:**

Refer to 1 Corinthians 4:6-13.

Explain that Paul uses himself and Apollos as examples of servant leadership. Each recognizes and celebrates the other's gifts and ministries. Each is faithful to what God assigned him to do and refuses to be judged or motivated by what someone else might think.

Ask the people how this applies to them. Encourage them to give examples.

Ask someone to read v.4. Explain you are not trying to shame anyone, but to encourage and motivate them to be servant leaders.

Read v.16

Say: I will end our study for today with a thought question for each of us. Would I want to say to others, "Be imitators of me"?

Ask a group member to pray that God will give each one in the church the ability to understand and be a true servant leader.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***Servant Leadership*** **1 Corinthians 4:1-14, 21**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Spend the time you have together memorizing the following scripture:

***So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2***

Discuss what it means to be “entrusted with the secret things of God”.

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Servant Leadership***  
**1 Corinthians 4:1-14, 21****Beginning the Service:**

Choose two or more from the following:

**Be Strong in the Lord**, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

**Find Us Faithful**, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI # 18259

**Grace Alone**, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI #2335524

**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

Pray for the peoples of Thailand and Laos. The Thai and Lao people primarily follow Buddhism with its strong overlay of spirit worship, charms, omens “luck”, idols, etc. Very few of them have a clear concept of the Creator God, much less an understanding of the work of Christ. Believers have worked in these countries for more than a century and yet evangelical Christians still amount to less than 1 percent of their populations.

**Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied.**

**Stewards of the Secret Things of God**  
**1 Corinthians 4:1-2**

***So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.***

These wonderful verses are truly worthy of memorizing. They could even become a “life verse” for some – a goal, a pledge, a hope.

The King James Version of the Bible states it in this way *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

Paul tells us that we ought to be seen by others – clearly, openly seen as servants of Christ. Our commitment to Christ is to be plainly seen by others. Nothing about the Christian faith allows for it to be a hidden thing. We will express our faith in different ways. Some may find it easy to share a testimony with a stranger. Others will express their faith in acts of kindness. Others will be shining examples of honesty in the workplace. But all will be openly accountable.

We are servants – ministers of Christ. Paul is not talking about church leadership. He is not referring just to himself or to Peter or to Apollos. He is speaking to the church at Corinth. Each one is a servant – a minister of Christ. In an earlier worship time we considered characteristics of the servant – humility, obedience willingness, loyalty, faithfulness, watchfulness and courage. We are to be gentle and not quarrelsome. We are teachers of others - exhibiting patience, meekness, goodness and wisdom.

Some versions of the Bible speak of stewards of the mysteries of Christ. Others translate the words of Paul as those entrusted with the secret things of God. A steward was an important person in a household or business in Paul’s day. They had authority over others; they made decisions about the buying and selling of things the business or household needed or produced. They were absolutely responsible to the master and were, in most cases, slaves themselves.

With such enormous responsibility it was essential that they take their task seriously. They were responsible, dependable, hard-working, committed to the well-being of the master. They were, in a word, faithful.

While the household or business steward had great responsibilities, the Christian steward of which Paul speaks has even greater responsibilities for we are stewards of the mysteries of God. We are entrusted with the secret things of God.

The word “mysteries” or “secret things of God” as Paul uses it, stands for the salvation of man by the crucifixion of Christ. This was God’s great plan of the ages, disclosed in the fullness of time. And those of us who have experienced salvation understand this plan of God for all men. And in that understanding comes the responsibility to share it with others.

So these verses, tucked away in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians are some of the most evangelistic and missionary verses of the Bible.



Since we know the secret things of God – that is, we understand that salvation comes by faith in Christ – there is simply no alternative to our sharing it. We must share it openly in word and in deed. We have been given a trust. For some that trust came because we had the privilege to be raised in Christian homes. For others the message of Christ was understood after years of living in hopeless despair. Others received a very direct message from God while some responded after years of seeing a friend or loved one live out the message of love. But each of us who name the name of Christ has been given a trust.

***Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.***

#### **Call to Commitment:**

**Give each participant a copy of the scripture. Spend a few minutes reviewing the words silently. Then say the scripture together.**

***So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2***

#### **Concluding the service**

Sing

**Let It Be Said of Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #597; CCLI # 1855882**

**Make a copy of this verse for each participant.**

***So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2***