

THE ONE SIN NEVER CONFESSED

STUDENT GUIDE

DAILY BIBLE READING

DAY 1	I CORINTHIANS 4: 1-5
DAY 2	I CORINTHIANS 4: 6-15
DAY 3	I CORINTHIANS 4: 15-21
DAY 4	I CORINTHIANS 4: 1-15
DAY 5	I CORINTHIANS 4: 1-21
DAY 6	I CORINTHIANS 4: 1-21
DAY 7	I CORINTHIANS 4: 1-21

Ben Franklin had a knack for personal piety. He recorded in a binder the numerous virtues he slavishly pursued, vowing to work on them weekly. As he made “progress” in virtuous living, he discovered yet another defect — pride. Of pride - his new found enemy - Franklin discovered, “Disguise it. Struggle with it. Stifle it. Mortify it as much as one pleases. It is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself . . . even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.”

Spiritual pride is the one sin rarely (if ever) confessed by believers. Yet pride is an inescapable reality of our experience. Pride is also a condition God holds in unseemly esteem.

OUTLINE

- 1. We Must Learn to Discern Pride (vv.1-5)** - The first step in understanding pride is knowing how to detect it. The problem with Corinth was not that they failed to understand what a personal appraisal was. Rather they failed to consider themselves in the appraisal. In other words, they were too busy criticizing everybody else!

A.) *Paul challenged the Corinthians how to **regard** the ministry (v.1)* - Leaders should be “accounted” as “ministers of Christ” and “stewards” of God’s “mysteries.” If the ministers live obedient lives under the Lordship of Christ, then they report to Him, not them.

B.) *Paul touches on what is **required** of the ministry (v.2)* - Dependability is no option for God’s servants. Pride can sabotage our trustworthiness by demanding others to surrender to our cause and goals.

C.) *Paul makes clear where the ministry is **reviewed** (vv., 3-5)* - Neither human judgment in general nor personal judgment in particular is infallible. We may be either too hard on ourselves or entirely too soft. On the other hand, God’s judgment is sure.

Question - *Explain how you deal with pride in your personal life. Be as honest as you know how. What is the difference between pride and confidence? Be prepared to explore the differences during group time.*

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2. We Must Learn to Dissuade Pride (vv. 6-15) - Once we have discerned the presence of pride in our lives, we must deal with pride the way Scripture deals with pride. And, that means we cannot go easy on it. Dealing with spiritual pride will require us to be selfless.

A.) *The proud attitude must be **rejected** (v. 7)* - Paul judges pride as unscriptural and unspiritual. While we are all different, we all bear the same Creator and Sustainer. Why, then should any one of them be “puffed up” toward the other?

B.) *The proud attitude must be **reflected** (v. 9-10)* - The Christian life is meant to be something quite different from the world. Hence, being “fools for Christ’s sake” implied personal humility, not personal pride.

C.) *Personal **renunciation** is required (v.13)* - For Paul, only the picture of the crucified life lived out everyday, did justice to the name Christian.

D.) *Personal **annihilation** could not be avoided* - This was the only way pride was to die in one’s life. Paul gladly becomes the “offscouring of all things” if only Christ could be magnified. Were Christians today more concerned about the glory of Christ, pride’s stronghold could be broken.

Question - *What do you think of when you think of being a “fool?” How is being a “fool for Christ’s sake” different from the normal way we think of “fools?” Explain.*

3. We Must Learn to Dissolve Pride (vv. 15-21) - Once we have detected spiritual pride and directed our energies to hear God’s admonition, calling it what it is —sin before Him —our privilege is to receive the affirmation, love and forgiveness the Lord offers to us.

Pride is a despicable sin which provokes Scripture to make the strongest possible images concerning the way God feels about —He hates it (cp. Prov. 6:16-17; 8:13). Nevertheless, God loves His people more and desires to cleanse them from all sin, including the sin of pride (cp 1 John 1:9)

Paul exhorts them to consider two undeniable realities concerning their relationship to God:

A.) *Remember their **birth** in Christ (vv. 15-16)* - Paul now must approach the Corinthians, not as a teacher, but as a father. The Corinthians were Paul’s children in the faith.

B.) *Remember their **behavior** in Christ (v.17)* - Pride had caused so much division in the church, they had forgotten their direction. Paul exhorts them to heed Timothy who would remind them of his ways in Christ.

Question: *Is it possible to forget how to live the Christian life? Why or why not?*

Wrap Up: D.L. Moody once said, “I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and everything that is contrary to God’s law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. We must be emptied before we can be filled.”

Is your heart filled with selfish pride turned toward yourself or selfless praise turned toward God? Recall God’s view of pride, not a pretty picture. Yet, do not fail to remember the God we serve, the God to Whom we’ve surrendered our lives, is a God of mercy, forgiveness, and grace. He desires to fill your heart with the riches of His presence if only you will look to Him.