

# I Corinthians 1 - 7

## “Faithful Steward”

### I Cor. 4:1-7”

If you would, would you stand as I read God's Word from I Cor 4:1-7

As you stand, I'll just say for those of you like to know like an outline and it's hard to give an outline of a passage like this. But I would say we're going to look at our next pastor and our current pastors, all 20 of them as stewards in their faithfulness. As stewards are faithful. They have a sober self-appraisal and they're team players.

Those are four big ideas that will be here in this passage.

Listen to God's Word as I read it to you. It's Apostle Paul speaking of the church of Corinth, which is sometimes critical of him.

*So this is how one should regard us. That would be Paul and Apollos and see us. This is how one should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, does regard as required of stewards that they be found faithful, sometimes translated, trustworthy, but faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself, for I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.*

Let's pray for a moment. Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you for this, this bit of dialog or instruction between people who knew each other well and sometimes were at odds. And so we pray that we would heed, we would hear and heed Paul's correction and hear what he was saying at that moment, what he's saying to all Christians at all times, in all places.

And we pray in Jesus name, Amen..

Paul is writing to the Church of Corinth about ministry. He's writing as he's about to get into some really difficult things. In chapters five and six and seven, and he's just finished some difficult things in chapters one, two and three. Quarrels, debates about who's the best preacher teacher, who founded the church, who should be follow. He had to put them in their place for respecting men.

He's going to have to chide them for taking each other to law courts and for sexual immorality, as we had in our prayer. And so Young's remarks just a moment ago. And so

in the middle, he pauses. He says, here's how you should think about me in my ministry. He says, above all, I am a steward. I'm a steward of the mysteries of God. That's what he was for about 40 years. During those years he was beaten. He was imprisoned, betrayed. He was shipwrecked not once, but twice. At sea overnight, he was attacked by heretics, betrayed by friends, turned over to the hands of Rome, and finally killed. And throughout all that time, he was stalwart. He was, he says, faithful. He was unbowed. He was a steward. That doesn't mean he thinks he was perfect. He says God is his judge. He's not his own judge. But pastors, above all, a steward, as best a pastor can be a steward of the mysteries of God. That's the most basic point. The stewards sometimes get tired of their role. Their role is secondary. The steward is not primary.

Steward stands in the place of the owner of property, the owner of a kingdom in place of the king, in place of someone. Now there's an interesting presentation in, novelistic form by J.R.R. Tolkien of a steward who went bad. His name is Denethor II. He was the steward of Gondor. He was very faithful for a long time. He was regal in aspect. He was courageous. He was a warrior. He defended his people. He was insightful. But he became bitter and despairing at the end of his life. According to the novel the end of his life he despaired, became cynical, angry, suspicious, and then finally murderous because he couldn't stay a faithful steward. And that's what's required. It is required.

Chapter four, verse one says that a steward be found faithful. Now what does a steward do? A steward on an airplane, which is not the original meaning at all, but a steward. An airplane gives us sprite and coke, and maybe some crackers or some snacks of some kind or another. If it's a long flight, they might give you a pillow or a blanket a little bit. That's a of what a steward was long ago, long ago. Before instance communication, a steward would stand in for the master of a farm, large farm and conduct his business, buy and sell fields, buy and sell animals in numbers. Stewards would represent the king, often the analogous ideas. Ambassador. Ambassador speaks for the king. Speaks for the ruler. Speaks for the owner. Paul did that. And at Corinth, some of the people there, weren't so pleased with him. They thought his speech was unimpressive and his manner. That's chapter two, verses 1 to 7. They thought he seemed weak. That's chapter two, verse three. Paul was, by ancient accounts, a small man and maybe a man, not with a booming voice.

He seemed weak. They thought he offered the milk, which I find to be an almost hilarious critique. I mean, honestly, calling the apostle Paul a milk man who has no meat. But, you know, leaders are criticized unfairly. And I got to tell you, Paul had nothing substantial to say is a pretty unfair criticism. But he was criticized. He says the truth of the matter is that what people think about me just doesn't matter all that much.

I have to give myself to my master, and that is God. Paul defense's apostolic role, no doubt. In chapter three and one part, he says that he should be compared to a master builder. That is to say, he started, founded, establish the church and built it up. So he's not a shy man, but he also says above all that he is a steward of the mysteries of Christ.

Now, many of you know that a mystery in our contemporary society is like a story, a whodunit. Why did someone steal or lie or commit murder? Very commonly in our murder stories. But a mystery in the Bible is a different matter. Has the common thread of something that's revealed, but what's revealed in the Bible is the mystery of God's plan of salvation.

In Ephesians and elsewhere, the mystery is that God chose to redeem his people through the incarnation of His Son, who died not like the sheep and the goats repeatedly offered, but rather gave his own lifeblood that those who trust in him would be freed from the condemnation of God and live forever. That's the mystery that God revealed. The idea of a mystery is something revealed.

And so Paul says, that's what we declared. That word us is so important to me. This is how people should regard us. And Paul says us. He means Paul and Apollos. He mentions Paulson, chapter four, verse six, and see if us or Peter, those are the three that the people there knew. I think it's good. I think it's important actually, for us here to remember that as much as we are, I'm going to say focused on a senior pastor.

And that's good and right. We should remember that we have about 20 pastors, and I lay my eyes on some of them even at this moment. And they are men of God. They are stewards of the mysteries of God. For example, week by week, morning, the evening we receive from John Haines music. And that music is theologically orthodox and leads us to praise God.

And it coordinates with the themes of the day and gives us gospel motivations for what we do. That is a steward of the mysteries of God. By helping us sing good music. Now we get caught up in the tunes and the accompaniment, but the lyrics count as well. Lyrics and the tunes together. The words. And of course, as someone is ministering in the hospital, they may be ministering one on one, but they are also stewarding the mysteries of God to those who are ill, those who are dying, those are despairing.

A discipleship class is similarly a matter of pastors. We have many pastors. Not one of pastors share sharing from the mysteries of God.

Groups of one, two, three, ten, 40 Sunday school classes with 89 to 100 people and more. So one of the things that makes me pause when I'm when I've been a lead pastor and when also I'm an interim pastor is people saying things to me like it encourages me when the light in your office is on, because I know that and people say things like this that our, our pastor singular is there or our father is there, and I wonder about that. I certainly believe that we should say our pastors are here. There are many pastors, and although I understand the focus on a senior pastor, it's much on our minds in our prayers. It's very important the choice of our next pastor. But it's also true that when people say, I'm so glad our spiritual fathers there, we must remember that that's merely an analogy, that we really have one father and that is God.

We have many fathers. If you ask me, who's my father? I say God the Father. God the father is my father, and I have a human father. And I've had many other fathers in the faith. Pastors who taught me carry me along. An uncle or grandfather coaches in my life. And so there are many. And I find this all in the simple word us.

This is how God should regard us. We are a team. And Paul called other people stewards called them his teammates, his delegates, Titus and Timothy. Certainly Paul sent them out in the churches to do what he would do in their place. And he says to everyone, Peter says to everyone who was a gift, that we are good stewards of God's very grace.

In other words, there is a sense in which everyone here is a minister or reformation. We celebrated last week. We celebrated the various themes of the Reformation, but one of them is the priesthood of believers because anyone can speak a word of God's truth, even if some are especially stewards of the mysteries of God. Even as Paul was.

So. There's a focus on all the pastors. There is a focus on somebody like Paul and like your next senior pastor who gets words like ambassador. So just as a steward took care property and business for the king, so the preacher, the teacher, the main preacher and teacher is an ambassador of Christ. And he proclaims, as Paul says later in the Corinthian correspondence, that Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciling nation.

That's what a preacher does. That's what the lead pastor does. He presents the ministry of reconciliation. Now, an ambassador does not get to say what he wants to say. An ambassador fundamentally repeats what the king told him to say. Now, the way you say it varies from place to place and time to time, because the challenges to the faith are constantly changing.

The fundamentals never change, and the challenges always change. Therefore, you have to phrase things in different ways. You have to use different analogies from time to time. But the ambassador, the Minister of reconciliation, the steward, the faithful steward never creates new content. They do create different ways of stating the content. So it reaches people in this day and this time pastors, all of them, especially the lead pastor, is a steward.

Now, when you say steward, you understand that's a high but not the highest role. And so what we don't want to do is make the pastor into our hero. We have one hero and that is Christ steward as a high role. Ambassador is a high role, but it's not the highest role. We don't put a pastor too high or too low.

I'm going to speak personally. One of the hardest things about being a pastor is the, is the tension between people putting it too high and too low to high means our pastor, our wonderful pastor, too low is criticism of every last thing you do a little bit wrong. I'm going to tell you the tiny, tiny example that brought this home to me about three years ago now I was speaking, I was interim in another church.

I was mostly a professor, but I was helping out a lot long hours at a wonderful church in Saint Louis. And early on we had a sort of an all church picnic. And we're going to we're going to have a, a community conversation, which we hadn't done a long time, and we did no idea how many people would come.

And we got three times more people than we expected. And so there's food, and the food is, you know, the people at the church are running all over the neighborhood trying to buy pizzas and trying to buy hot dogs and sandwiches. And we expected 70 people and there were 220 people. Now, I was at church starting at 8:00 and, and the last service ended about 12:20.

And I talked to a variety of people afterward because they had very spiritual needs. And so I was going to be at the end of the line. Now, I'd probably eating breakfast around 6:15 and after, you know, lunch. I was going to speak for a while. And so realistically, I was probably going to go from 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. if I didn't get any food.

Now, I don't know about you, but I don't like going 8.5 hours without food, especially if I expend energy which preaching requires. And as you know, I'm a relatively slender person. It's not because I don't eat, it's because I have a high metabolism, which makes me even more hungry. And so someone knowing this said, Dan, just go up to the front of the line.

We got to take care of our pastor. You got to have energy putting me high, right? We got you have to have energy to speak to us about this big community conversation, which is in the last an hour at least. And then there'll be conversation after that. So we got to take care of you, go to the front of the line.

Somebody heard that and said, yes, yes, pastor, go to the front of the line. Let's put in the pastor. Hi. And there was a woman who was behind me in line and she said, oh, so that's the way pastors do it. And I thought she was joking. I thought, oh, that's, you know, funny, you know, because and I looked at her. No, she was angry at me. She was thinking, you hypocrite. You talk about putting others first and you jumped in line ahead of me. That's too low. That's a tiny, innocent little example. But I got to tell you, that's the life of a pastor. Too high one minute too low the next exalted knock down. And this passage tells us where to put him. Steward. Pretty high. Not real high, ambassador. Pretty high. Not the highest Lord is the greatest one. Now what's required of a steward? Number one, faithfulness to the mysteries of God. No new gospel, but stating the gospel in new ways. Paul says it's important that we not judge our pastors too early. Do you see where it says this? It's required of stewards that they be found faithful with me. It is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. That's in verse three. What does he mean by that? He means that people have been judging him. They judge him because he doesn't seem to have oratorical prowess, because he is not exalted in his speech, the way Apollos was and way some other people are, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful, not, or rhetorically splendid.

And if we look at a preacher or a teacher and we question their rhetoric, we are running against God's explicit instruction. The call is faithfulness. That's a high calling. I did a search for this, for this sermon about how many people are called faithful in the Bible. It's a small list. Paul prays Timothy and take it because most of us don't know who he is, but for the faithful ministry.

First Corinthians 4:17. Colossians 4:7. Someone better known Abraham and Moses are both called faithful. Moses was faithful in all God's house and James, we saw a few weeks ago, is demonstrated to be faithful by his deeds, Moses and Abraham. Now that's interesting because Moses and Abraham, both had failings. Remember Moses said, listen, you rebels, shall we strike this rock as if he had the power to perform miracles?

And Abraham betrayed his wife a couple of times. Nonetheless, they're called faithful because the ark of their life, they're the ark of their life is faithful. Moses faltered. Abraham faltered. Your pastors are godly and sinful, fallen men. They will falter. Don't knock them down because they're not perfect, you know they're not perfect. You can be imperfect and faithful.

And that's what we have, I believe. I tell my wife, I don't know, four times a week. I say to my wife, Debbie, there is a terrific group of pastors here. Are they perfect? They're not perfect, but they're wonderful. They're godly, they're hard work, and they're sober minded. They're wise. They are faithful men. And your next pastor, Lord willing, will be a faithful man, but he will not be a perfect man, because there is no one but perfect who's perfect except the one perfect man, and that is Jesus Christ.

Now, faithfulness and faith go together. We don't use the word faithful with regard to faith as much as you should. Now, faithful means a man or a woman is faithful to their vows. It means, someone who is, steady at their work. And they don't. They don't stop. They finish the task. But in the beginning, faith and faithfulness went together.

And so we have the call to someone who pronounces the faith. And if your next pastor is not lead, pastor is not rhetorically gifted, please don't hold it against him because there is such a thing a pastor friend of mine said about a great orator forgive him. These are his words. Forgive me, I'm going to say them. He said, this man has sermons that are very impressive and they're magnificent fluff.

Magnificent fluff full of entertainment. Not even heretical, just empty. Faithfulness means gospel proclamation, presenting Christ. Now, I keep pounding this because it is a day in which, there is a lot of criticism of pastors and, people ask, why is it that there's so much reporting about pastors who fail, pastors are unfaithful, or couple of answers people give?

One is so many pastors fail. There's truth in that. Other people blame the media. You know, it's the media loves a scandal and people love bad news. And they love to drag politicians and athletes and artists down. I don't think we can just say it's the media. I

think we can say we must say that sometimes the church gets too enamored with skill and makes short shrift on character.

Now, the elders and pastors have heard me say this many times, so I'm going to be brief, saying, would you turn with me? The first Timothy three and four?

There are two passages describe a pastor, and the first one is very much about character. First, and the second one is about character and skill. Equally. So I'm not going to go through I'm just to ask you to notice that in this passage, first Timothy chapter three, beginning in verse one, that the unquestioned emphasis on an overseer is on their character, begins this way if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

Now when he says task, you expect a task to be described. But then he doesn't describe a task. He describes character. Which makes me think that what Paul's saying is the first task of a pastor and overseer is to be godly. An overseer must be above reproach. The husband of one wife, which means faithful to his wife, sober minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

That's the first task. And then back to traits. Not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well. Skipping couple words, for if he does not know how to manage his own household, how will they care for God's church? That's the second task or two tasks mentioned here and there 11 character traits, which tells us that the first requirement for a pastor is character.

You want a godly man, a man shape, not perfect, but a godly man. But then the second passage in chapter four, verses 12 to 16, makes the point that needs to be held in tension with the first second, with the first point, and that is the character and skill in some ways are absolutely equal. Look at verses 12 and following says this.

Let no one despise this. Paul writing to Timothy, who's his, his ambassador and God's ambassador. Let no one despise you for your youth. And then he talks about his character. He says, set the believers an example. Five years of life, speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. Character. And then he starts talking about duties or tasks until I come.

Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching, which means teaching publicly, reading and explaining the Bible, publicly, exhorting people, teaching people, large groups of small groups, and all that requires study of the word, which I'm going to show you back in first Corinthians four. In a moment. That's verse 13, verse 14. Don't neglect the gift you have again.

That's your ability which is given to you by prophecy when the elders laid their hands on you and then practice these things back to character, immerse yourself in them so that all may see your progress, progress, and what progress in your work. Yes, but also keep a close watch on yourself and the teaching. Watch yourself and the teaching.

Both are essential, so it's important to be morally strong and to have the skills. And then Paul meditates on this in the next few verses back in first Corinthians chapter four. And it goes like this. He says.

It's a small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I don't even judge myself, continues. I'm not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It's the Lord who judges me. I'll go back to the thought of of, pastors who fail for a second. People like Paul Tripp. I've written about this.

Many of you know the name Paul Tripp. You've read his books. He said that so many pastors begin. Well, and then somehow, somehow, their zeal for holiness slowly fades, their temptations rise, and they yield to some of them, it might be spiritual laziness, might be pride. Who knows what it might be? Paul Tripp says leaders can be compared to middle aged men who say they want to stay fit, but somehow gain 5 pounds every year.

He's not talking about obesity. He's talking about getting lazy spiritually, saying I want to grow, but somehow not growing spiritually. Juggernaut is a friend of mine, a long time elder in churches like this one, who's an aeronautical engineer who went to church, sorry, went to seminary and got a master's degree so he could be a better elder. So he's serious about it and he's one of my mentors friends in ministry.

He said, you know, pastors are like politicians. They start with a sincere desire to reform the system and sometimes end up being corrupted by it. Praise God, that's not been true in this church. I don't know how to say it strongly enough. This church has never had a pastor who had a serious moral failure. That's almost beyond belief.

In 65 years, dozens and dozens and dozens of pastors with their weaknesses, with their sins, we have never had a moral catastrophe. I want to say you better give thanks for that. If you if you feel bad about your church, feel good about your church. You've never had a pastor who looks seriously morally compromised. And we got to pray that that keeps going. And Paul says.

He's not all that sure about himself. He says, you know, I don't. As I examine myself, I don't see any moral problems. I'm not aware of anything against myself. Verse four says, but that doesn't mean I'm acquitted. God is my judge. And on the last day I'll stand before him. Verse five says he's going to come, and he's going to bring to light the things that are now hidden in darkness and disclose the purposes of the heart.

And everyone will receive commendation from God. He's not saying, I don't care what people think he's saying. I don't care all that much about what I or anyone think. God is the judge. He's not saying he doesn't care. He's saying I don't care all that much. I think there's something to be learned in all of us. I was talking to one of my pastor friends a while ago, maybe two months ago.

By now, and, he said, I got to tell you, I got to tell you something. I was in a prison ministry for a while. Pastor of a large church. He felt called to go into prison ministry. He's a Hispanic man. And there were a fair number of men in his church who were in

jail. And he went to visit them, and he went to visit the men who were in jail for major crimes, violent criminality, murder.

And he went in, he said, with the cultural narrative in his mind, the cultural narrative is, you know, low self-esteem. That's what causes, you know, push people down, push people down. And they will live down to their reputation, he said. That's not what I found, he said. I walked in, I said, I'm going to see what their what their level of self-esteem is.

I thought it would be low and he gave them a test. And the test was, how would you rate yourself more or less on a scale from 1 to 10 violent criminals, predominantly murderers, 1 to 10, ten being the highest possible rating, one being the lowest possible rating of all the men he surveyed, not a single one gave himself a rating lower than ten.

Every single one of the men major criminals said, I am as good as I can possibly be at a moral level. There were. There were several exceptions, however, about 20%, and said, I'm sorry, I'm so good. I have to give myself an 11 or a 12.

People don't always know how to appraise themselves, and low self-esteem is not the worst thing in the world. In fact, studies have shown that people low self-esteem, tend to be more humble, tend to be quicker to repent, tend to work harder because they think they have to prove themselves and have a variety of other virtues. Now, I'm not praising low self-esteem, I'm just saying the social narrative, the cultural narrative about high self-esteem and low self-esteem is, has been proven over and over and over to be false, not just by my pastor friend.

Serious studies of this. So Paul says I don't have anything against myself. I don't have any major sins that I see right now, but that doesn't exonerate me. I'm going to stand before God now what that means, then, is that there's no pastor who can be entirely trusted to their self appraisal. And from my standpoint, what that means, I believe, is that pastors need to have teams.

I don't just mean to lead pastor, lead pastor, and other pastors. I need to have teams that care for them and guide them and talk things over and review them and help them out if they're making a mistake before it gets too bad. Now, I will admit to you I wasn't planning on this, but I'm going to say it that I have a little team of three people here at this church and their job is to rein me in from my.

I would call it my clearest weakness. My clearest weakness is that I underestimate the time that almost any task will take. And so I say yes to things over and over and over again that I shouldn't. And then I think, why on earth that I do this? And I have three men at this church who have the right to say to me, don't do that.

Stop it. You're overextending yourself. Now, I'm not saying overextending oneself is a sin. I will say it's folly because I've been doing it my entire life, and I finally figured out that I gotta have somebody who can say veto can't do it. And I urge that urge that you care for your pastors. By helping them with an appraisal in this life, tell them what they're doing well, but also tell them, you know, brother, you've got a weakness here.

Now, that doesn't mean we're judging or condemning. Paul speaks against condemnation. It's God's job. But there is a place, you know, Jesus said, do not judge, lest ye be judged. We all know that one that's in Matthew seven, verse 4 or 5 and six over in John seven, verse 24, Jesus says, you can remember it by the servants.

Got it? John 7:24 he says, do not judge according to appearances. Judge with righteous judgment. So there is a place for righteous judgment.

Not just self-examination. Paul was probably getting a little nudge at the Stoics. The main philosophers main ethical religious system of the day Seneca, for example, whose teaching was so similar to Christianity in some ways that early Christians called him our own Seneca. But Seneca believed that morals didn't pass beyond the ceiling of this world. He had no idea that God was going to judge.

You said, what you should do is evaluate yourself every day. And Paul was an educated man. He's saying, you know, there's a place for self-examination, but really, God is the judge. That's what counts.

Don't listen too much to what people say. Here's another story about myself that I'm so glad to share with you. When I was a young pastor in training about 24 years old, the church I went to had an evening service and the lead pastor really didn't like preaching all that much. And so various people in the church would preach and take a turn and surprising it may sound, after a year in the church, I and several of my friends had preached. 24 year olds had preached not once, but 2 or 3 times, and I preached the sermon one day. And my friend, one of my classmates, and a very gifted man, if I may say so, spent. He's had a marvelous series of Kingdom services through his life. Walked up to me. He's only 24, 25 years old, said Dan. That is one of the best sermons I ever heard in my life. And he's only 24 and I'm his friend. So I think, okay, that's very nice. And a second person came up to me and said, Dan, that was a really good sermon. But that middle section where you use the illustration, you must never say that again. Okay, third person walked up to me and said, Dan, that sermon was a stench in the nostrils of God.

Now I will tell you, wasn't a nice person. He was on TV for being not nice once. I'm not kidding.

I'm so glad that happened. I'm so glad the same sermon, one of the first 5 or 6 sermons ever preached. One person said one of the best sermons they ever heard in their life, and one person said, extension the nostrils of God, another person said 88% was really good, but that those 12 minutes, they were terrible. Those three minutes, five minutes were terrible.

Don't ever do that. And I thought, what a marvelous introduction to crowd criticism and crowd appraisal. Don't think too much. Paul doesn't say, I don't care about anybody thinks. He says it just doesn't matter all that much. He's not saying choose your own

standards and be true to yourself. That's a contemporary message. He's saying, my judgment just isn't supreme.

God's the judge. Look at it again. Look what it says. He says we will stand before the Lord. Don't judge before the time before the Lord comes. Who will bring to light the things now hidden? God is the judge. God judges our hearts. And then he says, in case you're wondering, I do apply this to myself. You see it in verse six.

I apply all these things to myself. I'm not just talking to you. I'm applying to myself and Apollos. We're pastors. I applied to them for your benefit because it does benefit the whole church to have good and godly pastors, sober minded, who understand that God is their judge. You understand that they should examine themselves, but they also understand that our self-examination may not be all that accurate.

That's all. We need others to appraise us.

So Paul applies this teaching to us. He says one more thing that's very important. It's easy to miss. And I have to say, I studied this at length and read multiple books until I was convinced that that the various people studied the passage were right, he says. I've applied all these things to myself and a pause for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

Now that little word written not go beyond what is written.

Is a word that refers to the whole Old Testament. When you hear Jesus say it is written, but he says a number of times, what almost always follows is a quotation from the Old Testament, and a few times what it says exactly four times when it says what is written, or it is written. It refers to a major theme of the Old Testament.

But he says, don't go beyond what is written. He means we must not go beyond the explicit words of the Old Testament we have so far, and the themes of the Old Testament. The danger is again, put a different way. When someone starts to get creative. We're ambassadors and stewards. That's what pastors are. We must never go beyond what is written.

And if you start to go beyond what's written in the Bible, start to go beyond God's revelations, because you think you've got a better idea. And that's a good definition of being puffed up. As the passage says. In fact, in this, in this passage in First Corinthians 119 130 129, 216, 319 and 320, Paul is quoted Scripture six times.

He's saying, I soak my teaching in Scripture and stewards of the mysteries of God, soak themselves in the scriptures that God has given. We do not go beyond. For example, in 119 he said, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. That's a quotation of the Old Testament warning the Corinthians not to put too much stock in human wisdom.

And in first Corinthians 13:1 he says, let the one who boasts in the Lord. That's from the Old Testament. He's applying it to boasting. And men like himself receive us. We're Apollos. Don't go beyond what is written. Respect our leaders, love our leaders. Honor our leaders here our leaders support our leaders. Support them in their work. Support them in their preaching and their teaching.

Listen to what they have to say. And remember that Paul's asking that we be team players. I said, this is in the first word of our passage, that just that word us. It's not about me, it's about us, he says. And at the end, he says, I'm a part of that great train. Of all the people who've read the Word of God, all who've heard what is written, and I simply try to declare it a faithful steward of God's mysteries.

So I say to you, seek that in your next pastor, and seek that in all of your pastors, all 20 of them all who are here now, all who will come and go, because that is the way of humanity. All who will come and go over the next years of this great ministry of this God blessed church.

Let's pray together for a moment.

Heavenly father, I thank you for passages like this that first glance we think, what do they say to us? Well, it seems to be talking to people long ago, far away. And yet, Lord, you have said even in this word that these words are applied to us. May we take it to heart as we strive to understand what a pastor is, what a lead pastor is, and what an associate and assistant pastor are.

Help us to love and respect all of our pastors, all of them the stewards of the mysteries of God. By your grace, faithful, judged by you, sober minded, examining the cells but knowing that you're the only one who knows our hearts. And Lord, if we or they should falter, restore them. We pray back to the truth and the way of life that we might profit from their leadership.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.