

Motive Guessing in Conflict

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I Corinthians 4:1-9 ¹So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Now it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. ³I care very little, however, if I am judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴My conscience is clear, but that does not vindicate me. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God. ⁶Brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us not to go beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over another. ⁷For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? ⁸Already you have all you want. Already you have become rich. Without us, you have become kings. How I wish you really were kings, so that we might be kings with you! ⁹For it seems to me that God has displayed us apostles at the end of the procession, like prisoners appointed for death. We have become a spectacle to the whole world, to angels as well as to men. (BSB)

I. Here are the details of this passage.

- A.** Paul is defending his **authority**, as an Apostle, to speak into the situation that is happening in the Corinthian church. V. 1-4
- B.** He illustrates his position using the **analogy** of a servant entrusted with the caretaking of the master's household. V. 1
- C.** His motives in addressing some of the issues here are **pure**, but he leaves motive **judging** to God alone. V. 3-5
- D.** Paul uses an important phrase as a guide for not trying to judge another person's motive. The phrase is "do not go **beyond** what is written". V. 6
- E.** Motive **guessing** is at the center of most church disputes. V. 7-8 The Corinthian church had been extremely blessed and now they are starting to turn on one another.
- F.** Being a leader in the church can be a difficult calling, but we must **trust** God to defend us because He called us to do this. V. 9

II. How can we apply these truths to our life?

- A.** The authority of the Apostle Paul has been passed down to us through the New Testament. When our spiritual leaders are in **alignment** with God's word, we must listen to them. The **goal** of a spiritual leader is to be considered "faithful" to what they have been entrusted with.

- B. We must **steer clear** of trying to guess another person's motives. This leads to divisions, mistrust, and even abusive acts of payback.
- C. **Humility** is always the safe default. I am a beggar who has been given the best food around. In **humility**, I must continue to give the "Giver" of this bread all the glory.
- D. We need to **submit** to the authorities that God has put over us. Scripture gives us parameters for this authority.