

## Rewards of Serving

### Discussion Guide for 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Recently, in the wake of Billy Graham's funeral, every prominent Christian personality has been asked "who is the next Billy Graham?"

What has been striking is to see that almost every person has answered the question with a similar answer: there is no one alive today who has the stature, respect and name recognition of Billy Graham. Evangelism today isn't carried out in massive meetings with a big-named preacher, but by everyday individuals whose names you will never recognize this side of heaven.

If you ever followed Billy Graham's ministry, you would know that he would totally agree with that answer.

The church is the one entity on earth whose function and success are totally defined by the work of ordinary people sacrificing their own time and resources. Leadership is important in the church, but the real people making it happen aren't the ones with their name on a sign or who have the loudest voices. Jesus defines leadership as servanthood.

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:25-28

Have you ever thought about that? The great people in the church are the people who carry themselves as slaves on earth. God will make a big deal in heaven over people who refused to be made into a big deal on earth.

The New Testament clearly shows that God desires to reward his children with blessings. Too often, we sell God short by defining his blessing merely as "stuff" that we get to enjoy here on earth.

The true rewards of God are eternal in nature and will make the blessings of earthly prosperity look stupid in comparison.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 says a lot about the way God intends to reward his kids. Everyone who is in Christ is saving up treasure for our time in God's kingdom. The only question we have to ask is "what kind of treasure are we storing?"

## Life Group Discussion Guide

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

I believe Paul is speaking here about people who will join him in heaven. He labored day and night and endured countless sufferings so people could believe in Christ and inherit eternal life.

Never once did Paul care who got the “credit” for someone trusting Christ. His eternal reward is the people he will spend eternity beside. He always saw himself as part of a team where everyone had a specific job to do and everyone received the credit for a job well done.

The sobering thought in 1 Corinthians is that the value of the work of our lives will be revealed on a day of judgment. If we spend our lives pursuing trivial things, we will have nothing of value to enjoy in heaven. But if we spend our time on earth pursuing the things that God defines as gold, we will inherit very great rewards that will stay with us forever.

### Discussion Questions

- How does Paul demonstrate the humility of a servant in 1 Corinthians 3?
- How do you know the difference between work laid on the foundation of Christ vs. a foundation that will collapse?
- What is the fire that will reveal the true worth of our life's work?
- Do you believe it is possible to suffer loss when you get to heaven?
- Are you uncomfortable with the idea of God giving rewards to some people and not others?
- How can people be rewarded?
- Is there anything that has a more lasting value than a person's soul?
- What things do you value more than people?
- Who are you laboring for so that they can hear the Gospel?