

It is valuable to look at relationships in Scripture and lessons which we can learn. Relationships are usually a primary challenge for everyone. These verses present four sets of relations from which we can draw lessons.

I. *The first relational combination is between Apollos and Paul.*

“Now concerning” may indicate a request from the Corinthians. Apparently they were desirous of having Apollos come to Corinth, which in light of the divisions in Corinth over personalities makes this request significant.

1. *Do not be driven by jealousy.*

Neither Paul nor Apollos showed signs of jealousy. Jealousy is not a proper motivation or even a characteristic that should be allowed in us. Cf. Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:20. But jealousy was a problem in Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20).

2. *Submit to one another and do not presume undue authority.*

Paul as an apostle could have presumed certain authority, but did not. He supported Apollos in his decision not to go to Corinth. We are told to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21) and to think of others more highly than ourselves.

II. *The second relational combination is found in Stephanas, the Corinthians and Paul.*

Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus may have been the messengers which brought the questions of the Corinthian church to Paul. As first-fruits in Achaia, the household of Stephanas may have been either the first to believe or the first who were really a promise of a greater harvest.

1. *Devote yourselves to serving believers even when it is not recognized.*

Since Paul had to remind the people to recognize and submit to such as Stephanas (vv 16, 18), they probably were not doing so, even though Stephanas had committed or devoted himself to serving the saints (v 15). This attitude of service is confirmed elsewhere, e.g., Philippians 2.

2. *Recognize and submit to those who toil in committed service.*

Paul had to command this of the Corinthians, possibly because those who serve can easily be treated as servants. The Corinthians were not listening to these servants of God, they were consuming their service.

3. *Be trustworthy messengers of good news.*

The arrival of Stephanas and his colleagues brought joy and refreshment to Paul, because of his love for the Corinthians. Though possibly bringing questions, they also brought encouraging news. Cf. Proverbs 25:13, 25.

III. *The group to consider is Aquila, Priscilla and the churches.*

1. *Keep the larger body of Christ in mind.*

Not only did Aquila and Priscilla, who were known in Corinth, send greetings, but so also did all the churches in the province of Asia where Paul was ministering, though they didn't know the Corinthians personally. It is good to recognize being part of the larger body of Christ.

2. *Value even the quiet, quality service.*

Aquila and Priscilla were doctrinally solid, capable teachers, and very hospitable. Cf. Romans 16:5; Acts 18:26. But according to Romans 16:4 they also “risked their lives for” Paul. But they didn't make a show of their great service.

IV. *The last 3 lessons come in the closing 4 verses concerning Paul and the Corinthians.*

As is characteristic to Paul and apparently not uncommon in general in that culture, he takes the pen from the secretary and closes the letter in his own handwriting. The first words come almost as shock: “If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be on him. Come, O Lord!”

1. *Be passionate for the Lord.*

The word used for “love” is unusual in the writings of Paul, e.g., not the one in chapter 13, and speaks more of love between friends than of the actions one takes for the benefit of another. It speaks of our devotion to Christ. When all else is said and done, the bottom line is this: we are to love the Lord Jesus Christ. He should have our complete devotion.

2. *Elevate grace in your thinking.*

Paul always closes with some prayer for grace, but not as a formula. Grace is at the heart of Paul's thinking. We are saved by grace and live by grace.

3. *Love one another, even in strained times.*

This ending (v. 24) is found only here in 1 Corinthians. It is significant in light of the difficulties with the church, e.g., questioning his authority and motives and condoning sin. Never-the-less he closes this letter with the statement, “my love be with you all in Christ Jesus.”

Relationships are important. These closing verses of 1 Corinthians show that. We need to be humble before one another and before God. We should be committed to serving. Above all, love the Lord and one another.