



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# “THE TROUBLE WITH BEING A LION”

John Galbreath  
Bible Study Series

Text: I Corinthians 4:3  
Date: Unknown

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on an unknown date.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (I Corinthians 4:3).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

The sermon notes began with I Corinthians 4:3.

## I. The Price of Leadership is Criticism

### A. No one likes us anymore.

1. The debate in the United Nations this week has been most depressing.
  - a) *Even in Latin America, whose governments have most to lose by encouragement of Castro, have turned against us.*
2. No nation has done more for her fellow nations.
  - a) *Our resources have been poured out by the billions of dollars – not just for the defense of others, but for their uplifting, in Marshall plan aid, Point Four.*
  - b) *We have not set out to conquer others – and such places as the Philippines, we have given the benefits of education, medical care and, finally, freedom.*
  - c) *The only thing we wish for those outside our own borders is freedom and prosperity.*
3. Yet our best friends dislike us.
  - a) *And in capital after capital, our embassies are insulted.*

### B. “Pulling the lion’s tail.”

1. With apologies to Mr. Aesop: A mouse claimed to be the bravest mouse in all the world, because he could twist the lion’s tail. With his admirers standing at a safe distance, he crept up behind the king of the jungle, and taking some of the tail fur, he gave it a twist. The lion saw him, but it mattered not at all. It was beneath the dignity of the King of the Jungle to enter into combat with a mouse. When the mouse returned, he was praised by all his friends. Finally another mouse screwed up his courage and crept up and gave the tail a tweak. “You see, it is safe as it can be. He is afraid of us.” Finally, with a roar, the lion put out its claw and squashed the mouse.
  - a) *Moral, if you want to be a lion, you are bound to be in for some tail twisting.*

### C. We are ill prepared for the role.

1. Unlike our predecessors, we did not set out to become king of the jungle.
  - a) *We did not set out like Greece, Rome and Britain to carve an empire.*
  - b) *We had the scepter thrust upon us.*
2. It is one thing to let the mouse twist your tail when no one much cares.

*a) But there is a young whelp who has set out to become King of the Jungle, and he has developed some long, sharp claws, and a very loud roar.*

**D. Leadership, in any form, is bought at the price of a certain degree of tail twisting.**

**1. The Pirates will not get the sympathetic write-ups from other cities that we did last year, when we were working our way out of the cellar.**

**2. Suburbia has come in for some scathing criticism.**

*a) This is not in terms of comparison with other type communities.*

*b) Suburbia has what the inner city and the rural community would like to have.*

(1) When I came out, Upper St. Clair had a "Social, Quality Index" of 45 as against Oakdale's 49 and Bridgeville's 53.

(2) McMillan School still had outdoor "facilities."

(3) I was told by the executive of another denomination, "There is nothing out there but cow pastures."

*c) Whether we like it or not, we are getting a reputation of being a community of "fat cats."*

(1) As such, we can be expected to be less and less liked.

*d) Dr. Adamson was told, "We got to know your young people and were quite surprised to find that there are some very fine kids among them."*

(1) Your young people will feel the resentment that comes with suburbia.

**3. Churches become open for criticism.**

*a) In our early days, no one criticized our little church as we were struggling to try to get out of the school house.*

*b) Today, we can expect to be criticized.*

*c) In the past, if anyone criticized, our members would rise to a fierce defense.*

(1) "Don't join that church; they are always hounding you for money."

(2) Circles that have become glorified gripe sessions.

(3) Is it too much to expect loyalty?

(4) As individuals we are criticized.

(a) *Our critics, "All steamed up, but don't know what's cooking."*

## II. "If I am called to account by you, or by human court of judgment, it does not matter to me."

### A. Jesus was subject to criticism.

1. For the company he kept.
  - a) *For his disciples plucking grain on Sunday.*
  - b) *For his disciples not washing their hands before they ate.*
  - c) *For claiming to forgive sins.*
  - d) *For claiming to be the Son of God.*
2. He never became defensive and upset over criticism.
3. We find this, not in his opening year of ministry, but as his effectiveness began to threaten authority.

### B. Paul was subject of much criticism.

1. Aside from Christ, who was more devoted?
2. It was not enough that he be persecuted by those outside the faith.
3. He was the butt of opposition that chose to disqualify his position as an apostle.
4. Paul stated his defense, but did not let this pull him off into a tangent – into defensiveness, into appealing for personal loyalty to him.
  - a) *At a time when personality cults were growing up in the church, he refused to be a part of it.*
  - b) *He refused to question the integrity of Peter, Appollos*
  - c) *Personal invective is a gun that kicks harder than it shoots.*
  - d) *The good fruit is pinched.*

## III. "My judge is the Lord."

### A. Of itself, the first clause is the height of arrogance.

1. If a man is immune to criticism, he puts himself up as God.
2. Once Hoover complained to Coolidge about a particularly scurrilous newspaper attack. Coolidge replied, "I never read the fellows who are against me."

**B. Paul placed himself under the greater judgment of God.**

1. Man can be fooled, for he can see only our action.
2. God is the searcher of hearts and sees the motive.
  - a) *We find a deep humility in Paul – a sense of total inadequacy.*

**C. Paul knew the mercy of God.**

1. This gave him the courage to live unruffled by his critics.
2. If God in His righteousness could accept him, no critic could distract him.

**IV. Conclusion**

*As a nation, as a church, as a community, we have had leadership thrust upon us. We are under judgment – but it is God's.*

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### Study Questions -- Part I

*Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 4:3*

1 Corinthians 4:3 says: <sup>3</sup>I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

- Under what circumstances do you feel judged by others? How do you fight against those feelings? How do you work to stop judging yourself?

## Study Questions -- Part II

### *Sermon :*

I.A. This is another undated sermon. Based on the mention of Castro it might be from the early 1960's. Think about other times when no one liked the United States. Between 1946 and 1979 when could that have been true? Would it be true today? Do you think it has gotten better or worse in the last few years?

I.A.2.c. Do you think it is still true that we wish others only freedom and prosperity? How do you think those nations would describe our wishes for them?

I.A.3. Can you think of examples of when our "friends" have not treated us well?

I.C.1.b. In what ways do you think the United States has had the scepter thrust upon us? Can you think of other nations of whom that is true?

I.D.1. Based on this comment, do you think this sermon might have been preached in late 1960?

I.D.2.b.(1) Where do you think Upper St. Clair would rank today?

I.D.2.c. Do you think that view remains true today? Has it gotten better or worse since 1960?

I.D.2.d. How do you think our young people today are viewed by those who don't know them personally? What about by those they have met in Haiti, Malawi, India – or Homewood?

I.D.3.c. If someone criticized Westminster, how would you respond to their criticisms? Do any of the criticisms from those days hold water today?

II. How do you think Westminster would stand up to God's judgment? What can we be doing better?

II.A. What might others criticize us for? Would those things matter to God?

III.A. How can we believe this yet not appear arrogant?

III.B.2. When God searches your heart, what does he see? What motives does he discern?

IV. In what ways do you think our nation has leadership thrust upon it today? Our community? Our congregation?