HOW CAN YOU TELL IF A SPIRITUAL LEADER IS REALLY FROM GOD?

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

GODLY LEADERS DO NOT ENSLAVE AND EXPLOIT GOD'S PEOPLE (vss. 16-21a)

- *"In fact, you put up with it if someone enslaves you, if someone exploits you, if someone takes advantage of you, if someone is arrogant toward you, if someone slaps you in the face. 21 I say this to our shame: We have been too weak for that!"* (2 Corinthians 11:20-21)
- **Their genuine love for God compels godly leaders to lead and serve God's people with humility and sacrifice.**
- **Genuine spiritual authority is not measured by how many people serve you, but by how faithfully you serve the people God has entrusted to your care.**

GODLY LEADERS ENDURE WHATEVER HARDSHIPS ARE NECESSARY FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH (vss. 21b-29)

- *"Are they servants of Christ? I'm talking like a madman—I'm a better one: with far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, many times near death."* (2 Corinthians 11:23)
- **Suffering and hardships are not necessarily a sign of God's judgement but often are a result of faithfulness to the calling of God on your life.**
- **Sometimes the greatest evidence of your commitment to Christ is your willingness to keep serving Him when serving Him costs you everything!**

GODLY LEADERS ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR OWN WEAKNESSES AND FIND STRENGTH IN THE LORD (vss. 30-33)

- *"If boasting is necessary, I will boast about my weaknesses."* (2 Corinthians 11:30)
- **Self-sufficiency is rooted in pride and arrogance, but a godly person understands their strength comes from the Lord especially during hardships.**
- **God isn't looking for leaders who pretend they have no weaknesses; He's looking for leaders who recognize that their greatest strength comes from depending completely on Him.**
- **The moment you become convinced that you're strong enough to accomplish God's work without God's help is the moment your confidence has shifted from Christ to yourself.**

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION

Observation:

- What behaviors were the Corinthians tolerating from the false apostles, and how does Paul contrast himself with these leaders?
- What qualifications and experiences does Paul describe to demonstrate his credibility as a servant of Christ?
- What additional burden does Paul carry beyond his physical suffering? What does this reveal about his concern for the churches?
- What does Paul choose to boast about, and how does his account of escaping Damascus illustrate his approach to spiritual leadership?

Understanding

- What qualities should Christians prioritize when evaluating spiritual leaders, and why should biblical character matter more than public accomplishments?
- What are some warning signs that a spiritual leader may be using their position to control or exploit people rather than genuinely shepherding them?
- If you have influence over others, how consistently do you use that influence to serve and build them up?
- How does Paul's example challenge the idea that following Jesus faithfully should always result in comfort, prosperity, and an easy life?
- Have you ever experienced difficulty or opposition because you were trying to remain faithful to Christ? How did that experience affect your relationship with Him?
- How can we better encourage, support, and pray for leaders who faithfully carry the responsibility of caring for God's people?
- What is one specific step you can take this week to become a more humble servant, demonstrate sacrificial love, or deepen your dependence on God? Additionally, how can you intentionally encourage or support a spiritual leader who is faithfully serving others?

Loving Outward:

- Who do you need to share the gospel with this week?
- Who do you need to follow-up with regarding the gospel?
- Who are you bringing to church next Sunday?