

# **WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL FATHER?**

**1 Corinthians 4:14-21**

## **SPIRITUAL FATHERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO WARN CHRISTIANS ABOUT SINFUL BEHAVIOR**

- *“I’m not writing this to shame you, but to warn you as my dear children. 15 For you may have countless instructors in Christ, but you don’t have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (1 Corinthians 4:14-15)*
- **A pastor who truly loves the flock that God has entrusted to him is compelled to warn them about sinful behavior the same way a father warns his children of danger.**

## **SPIRITUAL FATHERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO “URGE” CHRISTLIKE BEHAVIOR AMONG CHRISTIANS**

- *“Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 This is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dearly loved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you about my ways in Christ Jesus, just as I teach everywhere in every church.” (1 Corinthians 4:16-17)*
- **Knowing what Christ expects of us is pointless if our knowledge doesn’t lead to behavior change.**
- *“But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder. 20 Senseless person! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless?” (James 2:18-20)*
- **Paul and other writers made it clear throughout the New Testament that having proper theology (belief about God and doctrine) must lead to proper behavior.**

## **SPIRITUAL FATHERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO INITIATE CHURCH DISCIPLINE WHEN NECESSARY**

- *“Now some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk, but the power of those who are arrogant. 20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. 21 What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?” (1 Corinthians 4:18-21)*
- **Those who disrespect godly leaders while thinking they know better than the leader(s) have become agitators in the church and according to the Bible they should be disciplined accordingly.**

- *“Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. 11 For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11)*
- *“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take note of that person; don’t associate with him, so that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet don’t consider him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.” (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)*

## **CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Observation:**

- According to verse 14, why does Paul say he is writing to the Corinthians—what is his intention?
- In verse 15, how does Paul describe the difference between having “countless instructors” and having “fathers in Christ”?
- What does Paul urge the Corinthians to do in verse 16, and how does Timothy’s role in verse 17 support that?

### **Understanding:**

- Paul’s goal was not to shame but to warn “as dear children.” How does this reshape the way you think about correction or confrontation in the Christian life, especially from your Pastors?
- Who in your life has served as a spiritual father/mother—someone who loved you enough to warn you when you were headed toward danger? How did their warning help you grow spiritually?
- Timothy modeled Paul’s teaching by living it out. Who in your life models Christlikeness in a way you want to imitate?
- What area of your life needs to shift from knowing Christ’s teachings to living Christ’s teachings? What practical step could you take this week to begin that change?
- Paul says the kingdom of God is not about talk but about power. What’s the difference between “talking spiritually” and living with the power of the Holy Spirit?
- Church discipline is often avoided today, yet Paul saw it as essential to spiritual health. Why is loving, biblical correction important in Christian community?
- How can we build a culture where correction is gentle, loving, and restorative rather than harsh or punitive?

### **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?