



Today, we continue our series through 1 Corinthians called *11 Dangers for Every Christian*. In this passage, Paul helps the Corinthians understand what faithful spiritual leadership should look like and challenges them to consider how they respond to those God has placed in their lives to help them follow Christ. As we study these verses, we will consider how to recognize godly leadership, why spiritual accountability matters, and how pride or past hurt can keep us from receiving the leadership God intends for our good.

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 4:1–2, 14–21

Discussion Questions:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 4:1–2. How does Paul describe the role and responsibility of a spiritual leader?

Paul describes spiritual leaders as **servants of Christ** and **stewards of the mysteries of God**. A servant recognizes that he lives under the authority of Christ, while a steward understands that he has been entrusted with God's Word and must handle it faithfully. Biblical leadership is not about owning the church or building personal influence but faithfully serving Christ and caring for what God has entrusted to you.

Extra: What should you look for in a pastor to determine whether he is faithfully serving Christ and stewarding God's Word?

2. According to verse 2, what standard does God place on spiritual leaders?

Paul says that stewards must be found faithful. Scripture does not require pastors to be perfect, but their lives and ministries should demonstrate a consistent pattern of faithfulness to Christ. That gives us a helpful distinction when evaluating spiritual leadership: we should look for pattern over perfection.

Extra: Why can expecting perfection from spiritual leaders become unhealthy?

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3. Read 1 Corinthians 4:14–15. Why does Paul describe his relationship with the Corinthians in terms of a father and his children?

Paul had brought the gospel to Corinth and had invested deeply in their spiritual development. His relationship with them was more than simply delivering sermons or information; he loved them enough to help guide, protect, and correct them. Healthy spiritual leadership carries genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of the people being led.

Extra: Who has served as a spiritual father, mother, or mentor in your life?

4. What does Paul's statement, "I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you," teach us about godly correction?

Paul's goal was not humiliation but spiritual growth. Because he loved the Corinthians, he was willing to tell them when their attitudes or actions were moving them away from Christ. Godly leadership does not avoid every difficult conversation; sometimes love requires us to speak truth that another person needs to hear.

Extra: Why can receiving correction be difficult even when it comes from someone who genuinely loves us?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 4:16–17. Why does Paul tell the Corinthians to imitate him?

Paul believed his own "ways in Christ" provided an example the Corinthians could follow. Biblical leaders should not simply teach people what Christianity looks like; their lives should increasingly demonstrate it. A healthy spiritual leader should be able to say, in some meaningful sense, "Follow me as I follow Christ."

Extra: What qualities would make someone's spiritual life worth imitating?

6. Why did Paul send Timothy to Corinth?

Timothy was someone Paul had personally discipled and trusted to remind the Corinthians of Paul's ways in Christ. This shows that biblical discipleship is relational and reproducible—one person helps another follow Jesus, who then helps someone else do the same. Healthy spiritual leadership is not only concerned with gathering people but with helping them mature into faithful disciples.

Extra: Who are you currently allowing to know you well enough to help you grow spiritually?

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7. Read 1 Corinthians 4:18–20. What does Paul identify as the deeper problem among some of the Corinthians?

Paul says that some of them had become arrogant. Their confidence in themselves had made them resistant to Paul's leadership and correction, but Paul reminds them that the kingdom of God is demonstrated through genuine spiritual power rather than impressive talk. Pride can make us believe that we no longer need anyone to challenge, teach, or guide us.

Extra: What are some signs that a Christian may be becoming spiritually unteachable?

8. Read 1 Corinthians 4:21. What does Paul's reference to a "rod" and a "spirit of gentleness" reveal about spiritual leadership?

Paul clearly preferred to come to the Corinthians with love and gentleness, but he was prepared to exercise stronger correction if their rebellion continued. A godly spiritual father does not correct because he enjoys control; he corrects because he cares about the spiritual direction of the person he is leading. How we respond to biblical instruction often determines whether stronger accountability becomes necessary.

Extra: How do you typically respond when a trusted spiritual leader challenges something in your life?

9. How can pride or past pain cause us to reject godly leadership?

Pride can convince us that we know better and should not have to answer to anyone, while past hurt can make us guarded and suspicious of spiritual leaders. Neither means that we should blindly trust every pastor, but both can keep us from receiving healthy spiritual leadership when it is present. Scripture calls us to examine leaders carefully while also remaining humble enough to receive the protection, teaching, accountability, and example of faithful leaders.

Extra: Is it easier for you to trust spiritual leadership or to keep spiritual leaders at a distance? Why?

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