

I. Introduction: In this passage, Paul speaks to the church as their spiritual father, giving them instruction and explaining his plan to come to them and confront certain people.

- A. A spiritual leader is to be like a spiritual father in the family of God; he protects and provides for his family, so that they can grow and mature in their life in Christ.

II. Spiritual Fathers (1 Cor 4:14-21).

A. A Father Admonishes (v. 14).

1. Paul explained to the Corinthians that he was admonishing them for their behavior, because he loved them as a father and wanted to see them grow in Christ.

B. A Father Loves (v. 15).

1. Paul told the Corinthians that they would have many teachers and leaders in their lifetime, but they would only have a few spiritual fathers who loved them.

C. A Father Disciples (vv. 16-17).

1. Paul told the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitated Christ. Thus, he sent Timothy to them, so that he would remind them of Paul's example of faith.

D. A Father Confronts (vv. 18-21).

1. Paul warned them that he would visit them soon, and that when he arrived he would confront the arrogant people in the church who opposed him.

III. Conclusion: Paul left the decision up to the Corinthians to decide how he would come to them. He would either come sternly or gently based on their response to his letter.

Questions About: Spiritual Fathers

1. Who is your spiritual father in the faith? Who first shared the Gospel with you? Who initially disciplined you? Who has been responsible for helping you to grow in Jesus?
2. How did Paul feel about the Corinthians? (**v. 14**) What did Paul say he didn't want to do? (**v. 14**) What did Paul say he wanted to do instead? How are good fathers tough and tender?
3. What two kinds of people are there in churches? (**v. 15**) Why are there more tutors than fathers in churches? How did Paul become a father to them? (**v. 15; Acts 18:1-11**)
4. Have you been a spiritual father to others? Who preached the Gospel to you? When? Where? Who will be spiritual fathers to this generation? Who will preach to them? (**Rom 10:14**)
5. How does a spiritual father disciple their child? (**vv. 16-17**) How do children imitate their parents? Could you say what Paul says? (**vv. 16**) How are you indirectly influencing others?
6. Who did Paul send to Corinth to disciple them? (**vv. 16-17**) Why did he send Timothy to them? (**v. 17**) How was Timothy uniquely Paul's son in the faith? (**Phil 2:19-24**)
7. How was Paul planning to confront them when he came? (**vv. 18-21**) What were the rumors that Paul was hearing about his coming? (**v. 18**) How had some become arrogant?
8. How was Paul going to have a showdown with them when he returned? (**vv. 18-21**) What did he say the Kingdom of God was about? (**v. 20**) How did he want to come to them?

Prayer

1. Pray that God would help you to appreciate the spiritual fathers in your life.
2. Pray that God would help you to be a spiritual father to others by proclaiming the Gospel.