

Studies in 1 Corinthians

▶ LESSON XIII: *Nurturing Leadership in the Church*

Text: 1 Cor. 4:7-21 (NLT)

7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? **8** Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!

9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. **10** We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! **11** To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. **12** We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; **13** when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

14 I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. **15** Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. **16** Therefore I urge you to imitate me. **17** For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

18 Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. **19** But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. **20** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. **21** What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. A good teacher employs a variety of persuasive means to get a point across. Paul sometimes used sarcasm and irony. Can you identify which verses are written in this tone? Why was this technique an effective way of breaking through the smug philosophical façade of the Corinthians?

*** Sarcasm:** “A form of irony in which apparent praise conceals another, scornful meaning. For example, a sarcastic remark directed at a person who consistently arrives fifteen minutes late for appointments might be, ‘*Oh, you’ve arrived exactly on time!*’” (American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy)

*** Irony:** “The use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning: *the irony of her reply, ‘How nice!’ when I said I had to work all weekend.*” (Dictionary.com)

1 Kings 18:26-27, “Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. ‘O Baal, answer us!’ they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. At noon Elijah began to taunt them. ‘Shout louder!’ he said. ‘Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.’”

2. While Paul may have come across to some as harsh, what was his real motive for writing these things? (vs. 14)
3. In what sense had Paul become like a father (vs. 15) to the Christians in Corinth? What does his example teach us about the way leadership should be in the church? (cf. vv. 12-13, 16;)
4. Timothy would be instrumental in helping the church at Corinth get back on its feet. What was his role? (vs. 17)
5. Identify at least one practical take-away from this chapter that you can benefit from.