

Week 8 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

LifeGroup Leaders—As always, pick the questions below that you think are most helpful and feel free to restate them in a way that makes sense to you!

These last verses of 1 Cor 4 are at the end of the first major section of the letter. You might find it helpful to go back and read the first 4 chapters once or twice to capture the flow of Paul's argument and notice how it all connects together.

Text: 1 Cor 4:14-21

Icebreaker: Who have you tried to imitate? In what area of life did you want to be like them?

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

2. These verses conclude not only chapter 4, but all of Paul's response to the Corinthian's division that began in verse 10 of chapter 1. Why do you think Paul seeks to clarify his motivations in verses 14-15 for what he has written so far?

Paul's words and tone can seem harsh but he wants to be careful to express his love for the Corinthians. He wants what's best for them! He wants them to be united in a mature faith and for them to hear it as motivated by love rather than just a call to shape up.

Application: What difference do a person's motivations make when you are confronted by them (only hypothetically, right 😊)? What difference does it make if you know the person correcting you loves you?

3. In verses 15-16, Paul emphasizes the importance of a "father in Christ." How do you think "fathers" are different from those who are just spiritual guides?

The topic of fatherhood can be difficult for those who had a difficult relationship with their earthly father, but Paul has the ideal father in mind. A father can be trusted. A father is invested and genuinely cares about a child. A father wants what's best and has a concern that goes far beyond just conveying information as an emotionally disconnected tour guide might.

Application: Who fits the role of a spiritual father or mother to you? Who are you a spiritual father or mother to...or who would you like to be in that role to?

4. As a father to them, Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him. How can we make sense of this when he has just been admonishing them for saying “I follow Paul...” (1:12, 3:4-9, 3:22, 4:6)?

The core problem, as we said back in chapter 1, is not that the leaders were seeking to accumulate followers but that the followers were seeking greater status by following the right leaders! Paul has used these 4 chapters to try to state his case for why it’s foolish for the Corinthians to try to gain social status by attaching their names to himself, Apollos, and Peter (Cephas). Leaders in the church aren’t there to be thought of as celebrities but servants and stewards (see 4:1 from last week). It’s not a contradiction, then, for Paul to tell them to follow his example...so long as they stop trying to look to him (or Apollos or Cephas) as a kind of status symbol, as though the Corinthians are wearing the right brand of clothes that will impress others (see 3:5-9). Ironically, Paul’s example of finding one’s status in Christ will help prevent them from having a distorted view of Paul and other human leaders.

Application: Like Paul, are you comfortable asking others to follow your example? Why?

5. In verses 18-21, Paul underscores the importance of displaying the power of God’s kingdom and not only the talk of it. What kind of things demonstrate God’s kingdom power at work in a person’s life?

Answers can range broadly here but it’s helpful to be somewhat specific. For example, God’s power might be displayed in a transformed thought life, a different way of speaking, a greater generosity, a sacrificial use of time and energy, a care for the poor or marginalized, a conviction over sin, a restored relationship, etc. These kinds of things demonstrate God’s power.

Application: Think about your own life. Where do you see evidence that demonstrates God’s power at work?