

## *I Corinthians 4:14-21*

### *Following the Leader*

- Paul often encouraged Christians to follow his example.  
**I Cor.11:1** “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”.  
**II Thess.3:9** “We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.”  
**Phil.3:17** “Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.”
- In what sense are we to follow Paul's example?  
Certainly not as - the chief of sinners, a wretched man, an Apostle to the Gentiles.  
But perhaps as one who sees himself as “the chief of sinners” and as a “wretched man” and as an ambassador for Christ to the world.
- In I Cor.4:14-21 we see Paul's example in some ways that may provide a model for us all.

#### **A. A gracious posture.**

“<sup>14</sup>I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”

- How important is a relationship in offering correction?
- Does shame have a place in ministry?
- Do you agree with this statement? **“You are not going to be effective in correcting a person until and unless you communicate that you love them.”**
  - L**istening to their concerns,
  - O**verlooking their weaknesses,
  - V**aluing their strengths,
  - E**mpathizing with their pain.

#### **B. A family perspective.**

“<sup>15</sup>For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet {you would} not {have} many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. <sup>16</sup>I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.”

- Which of Paul's ways might he have in mind?
- How many people have played a role in your spiritual growth?
- What were the roles they played?

**I Cor.3:4-9** “For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not {mere} men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave {opportunity} to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.”

#### **C. A Christ like pattern.**

“<sup>17</sup>For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.”

- We all need to be reminded of “the ways” which are “in Christ.” What does this mean?
- The Apostles' letters may give us some clear guidance in this area.

#### D. A powerful presence.

“<sup>18</sup> Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup> But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power. <sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. <sup>21</sup> What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”

- Does an emphasis on grace exclude “tough love?”
- Paul's image in the minds of some was one of being soft (perhaps because of his teaching on grace).

**II Cor.1:17** “When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, “Yes, yes” and “No, no”?”

**II Cor.10:10** “For some say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.”

**I Cor.9:1-3** “<sup>1</sup> Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? <sup>2</sup> Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.”

#### E. The point of this text

**We need to not only listen to what Paul says  
but also note how he relates  
as he shows us how to follow Christ.**

#### F. Lessons from this text