

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: Cultivating a Gentle Spirit

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4:8-21

Instructions: - *Let the above passages be read each time you come together to study this topic so that everyone could participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on the topic and come up with follow-up questions. Participants should be brief in their responses and use relevant Bible references to illustrate their points. They should be careful not to dominate the discussion to allow everyone to have an equal opportunity to participate.*

Introduction: James Stalker was a Scottish minister and author at the end of the nineteenth century. In one of his books, he wrote: When I first settled in a church, I discovered a thing of which nobody had told me, and which I had not anticipated, but which proved a tremendous aid in doing the work of the ministry. I fell in love with my congregation. I do not know how otherwise to express it. It was as genuine a blossom of the heart as any which I have ever experienced. It made it easy to do anything for my people. We can only imagine the powerful spiritual nurture that came from a pastor who had fallen in love with his people. In 1 Corinthians 4, the apostle Paul uses several vivid metaphors from the Greco-Roman world to illustrate true Christian leader- ship-leadership that acts out of love and gentleness for those being led. Read 1 Corinthians 4:8- 21.

Discussion Questions

1. We have all had many leaders: parents, bosses at work, teachers, pastors, youth workers, committee chairs and many others. Think of one person who you have valued as a leader. Why?
2. There are three basic voice volumes: soft, normal, and loud. Know that the tone of your voice is actually saying something - communicate how you are feeling. Often, it gives a stronger message than your words. Sometimes, how you say something can change the meaning of what you are saying. It can even give the message that you don't really mean what you are saying. As you view the content of

the three major sections of this text, what voice tones do you detect by the content of each (vs. 8-13, 14-17, 18-21)? Let us try reading this text aloud using these voice inflections.

3. What vivid pictures do you see in Paul's descriptions of the apostolic leaders, including himself (vs. 8-13)? What principles of Christian leadership can you gather from these same verses?

4. Paul seems to think that the Corinthians have enjoyed their many opportunities for wealth and education and freedom to practice any form of religion, but somehow, they've become spiritually poor and immature in the process. Most people in today's Western culture have similar opportunities-and temptations. What caution can you personally take from Paul's contrast of apostolic leadership and Corinthian leadership?

5. How does Paul's picture of children in a wealthy family help illustrate what his relationship is and is not to the Corinthians (vs. 14-17)?

6. What are your observations from reading these verses about Paul's ministry in Christian churches beyond Corinth?

7. "I urge you to imitate me," says Paul in verse 16. At what point can the use of similar words as a parent be trustworthy?

8. What would it take for you to be able to say these words with some degree of integrity assuming you are a Christian leader?

9. Paul promises (threatens) a personal visit in verses 18-21. He asks the Corinthians to choose whether he is to come with a whip or "in love and with a gentle spirit." His letter demonstrates that he is capable of both. If you were a leader in the Corinthian church, how would you help your church prepare for Paul's arrival?

11. Paul ends this section of his letter with a quote from Isaiah 40:13 where the Old Testament prophet asks, almost without hope, "For who has known the mind of the Lord / that he may instruct him?" Then Paul adds his own astounding statement: "But we have the mind of Christ (vs. 16). What is your emotional and spiritual response to this announcement?