



Week #9 Leader's Guide – June 5, 2016

Straight Talk: Bold Letters to the Corinthians
SDBC Community Groups

“Real Community”

Key Passage:

1 Corinthians 4:14-21

14 I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 16 I urge you, then, be imitators of me. 17 That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 18 Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. 21 What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

Paul boldly rebukes and instructs the Corinthian church in this letter, but he doesn't do this in order to make them ashamed; he does it because he loves them as a father loves his children. Here are four characteristics of a "father" that we can learn from today's text:

- a. Fathers are fiercely loyal;
- b. Fathers give children what's good for them;
- c. Fathers pour into their children;
- d. Fathers discipline their children.

What is a **guide**?

"Paidagogos refers not so much to a 'teacher' as to a 'guardian,' the servant who walked a rich child to school and back home and helped him with his recitation at home and so was also a tutor to some degree" (Ben Witherington, 147).

1. Paul says that the Corinthian church has ten thousand (gk. *myrios*) guides. He is using hyperbole to exaggerate how many guides there were in the church in Corinth (hence the translation "countless guides"). Evidently, the Corinthians were already walking alongside one another in community. Then why did Paul think it was a bad thing to have guides? Why did he find it necessary to encourage the Corinthian church to be fathers?

2. Are you walking alongside one another as a guide or as a father in your community group? How can we become more like fathers? Are their practical ways becoming more like fathers rather than guides?

3. In v.17, Paul demonstrates that he himself was a father walking alongside and pouring into Timothy. Do you have a Timothy in your life? If you're like a Timothy in your current life stage, do you have a Paul in your life?

4. v.17 reminds us that the ultimate goal of living in community is to remind each other of the ways of Christ. How are you realizing that goal in your community group?

5. vv.18-21 give us a sense of Paul's bold leadership in the Corinthian church. Back in 1st century Greco-Roman culture, people wouldn't have read Paul's letter on a screen in the form of an email. They would have gathered together to listen to a person read aloud Paul's letter—almost to the extent of "performing" Paul's letter. If you were there listening to these words, how would you feel?

6. Why is it important to hold one another accountable in the church as Paul was holding the Corinthians accountable?

7. Are you able to hold one another accountable in your community group? Is it a "safe place" for this to happen?