

## INSTRUCTORS AND FATHERS

**“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” (1 Cor 4:15 KJV)**

Almost everyone knows that Paul was right. There is a dramatic difference between a teacher and a father. We have had many teachers but not many fathers. Our “many teachers” helped us in school, athletics, music, work and other ways too numerous to mention. Many, if not most of these teachers, were dedicated and competent. When the class was over, and the lesson was done however, these dedicated teachers moved on to other students or other activities. Therein is the difference. Our “fathers” never moved on, they loved us too much for that. They had more than a professional interest in our progress.

My own father was born in 1903 and never made it beyond the third grade in school. He was remarkably intelligent with an excellent memory, but his family was so poor that he had to stay home and work. His share cropping father died when he was only 15 and suddenly he became the primary wage earner to support his mother. When their meager crops were in they had to move and father went to work in the mines. Later he and grandmother moved to Tulsa and father became a fireman. When my mom and dad married, Grandmother Laura Belle was a part of the package. She lived with us for over 15 years until her failing health required professional care. Even then my father visited her on a daily basis and was standing by her side in the middle of the night when she passed on to glory.

For whatever reason, my father wanted me to experience what poverty had denied him. He encouraged me to get an education, play sports, hunt and fish, and not grow up too soon. When I went out for a little league team he bought a bat and a half dozen baseballs and took me to the park. Hour after hour he would pitch and tirelessly chase down the balls that I would hit. When I was only eight years old he bought me my first shotgun. It was a double barreled .410. He diligently drilled safety into my mind and neither of us ever had a serious accident with a weapon of any kind.

I have had many teachers, but not one of them loved or cared for me like my father. He was willing to take me with him when it was both costly and inconvenient to do so. He was far more demanding than my teachers and chastened me for errors that they would overlook. Heb. 12:8 makes reference to this contrast and observes: **“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.” (Heb 12:7-8 NIV)**

Even though Paul had no biological relationship with the Corinthians he loved them in a very special way. He begot them by the Gospel and sustained with them that special father and child relationship. Their teachers would come and go but Paul’s love and attention was constant. Notice the context of his remarks about fatherhood in 1 Cor. 4.

- v. 9 - For their sake he was made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.
- v. 10 - While they were considered wise, he became a fool. While they were honored, he was despised.
- v. 11 - For their sakes Paul went without proper food, clothing, and housing.
- v. 13 - For their sake he was defamed and became like filth and the off scouring of all things.
- v. 14 - His desire was not to shame them, but to admonish them like children.
- v. 15 - They may have had 10,000 instructors, but not many fathers.
- v. 16 - Paul was like a father to them and encouraged them to imitate his example.

These verses of Scripture ought to have at least two positive influences on our lives. First they should help us to honor our earthly fathers. Secondly, they ought to deepen our resolve and commitment to the church. May our love for the church of the Lord Jesus be so strong that we too will behave more like “fathers” than mere teachers.