

#2 – NOT MANY FATHERS (Pete Greig)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

1 Corinthians 4:14-16 (NIVUK)

I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Timothy 4:16-5:2

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

1. The word translated 'guardians' in 1 Corinthians 4, is the Greek, *paidagogos*, literally a 'trainer of boys'. Typically they were educated slaves who were given charge of the life and moral development of the sons of a family and responsible for inculcating all the useful skills they would need later as adult citizens. They were not just teachers, but legally appointed overseers authorised to administer discipline, chastisement and instruction. The closest equivalent today would be something between a (very tough) nanny and a private tutor!
 - *What do you think Paul meant when he said, 'Even if you had ten thousand guardians (/teachers) in Christ, you do not have many fathers.'*
 - *Who are your 'teachers in Christ'? (As well as the preachers you hear in church, these may be preachers, Bible teachers, authors, podcasters, makers of Youtube Videos, Christian TV peeps etc.) Perhaps not 10,000, but probably quite a few!*
 - *Have you ever known someone you would consider to be a 'father through the gospel'? What do you think is the difference between a teacher and a father? Which is easier?*
 - *Paul considered Timothy to be his son – someone who shared his spiritual DNA (although obviously he didn't have that language!), and someone who would remind the Corinthian church of Paul's way of life. Do you have a way of life you would recommend to other people?*
 - *A teacher might say, listen to what I say. A father says, imitate me. Do you think it would be a good idea for people to imitate you?*
2. Pete talked about a crisis of masculinity in our country; that 1 million children are growing up without a meaningful relationship with a man; that we are facing a crisis of fatherhood. Jesus spoke constantly about God as Father. The prayer he taught his disciples to pray begins, 'Our Father...'
 - *What are the qualities of a good dad?*
 - *How can we each grow to be the best spiritual father or mother we can be?*
 - *What do we need to repent of?*