

“One Body, One Spirit”
An Orthodox Christian Sunday School Curriculum based on the Books of I and II Corinthians
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Education Ministry

Feedback on this lesson plan is welcome and encouraged [HERE](#).

Title of Lesson:	Lesson Number:	Key Verse(s)	Grade Level
Leaders in the Church	4	1 Corinthians 4	PreK K-1st Grade 2nd-3rd Grade 4th-6th Grade Junior High ✓ Senior High

Lesson Length: 30 minutes (main) + 15 minutes (extension)

Key Ideas in this Lesson:
- Church leaders are humble servants of Christ and faithful stewards of God’s mysteries. - Spiritual leaders play an important role in spiritual healing and guidance. - We are all called to humble service and faithful stewardship in our daily lives.
Key Vocabulary in this Lesson:
- Steward - A person entrusted with managing the affairs of another. In the Church, leaders don’t own the truth or the sacraments; they manage them on behalf of God. - Servant (Diakonos) - “One who waits at tables.” It emphasizes that leadership in the Church is about humble service rather than worldly power. - Spiritual Father - A title for a priest that emphasizes his role as a humble steward. - Puffed Up - A term St. Paul uses for pride or arrogance. Someone who is inflated with their own importance.
Suggested Essential Question(s) for this Lesson:
- What is the difference between a “Boss” and a “Servant-leader”? - Why does the Church call priests “Father” if he isn’t our biological parent? - Can someone be a leader in the Church if they aren’t “in charge” of a program? - What does it mean to be “Faithful” with something that doesn’t belong to you? - How can we “imitate” our spiritual leaders without losing our own unique identity?
To prepare for this lesson, you will need:

Audio/Visual	Printed Materials	Craft/Activity Materials
(Optional) “The 12 Lessons of 1 Corinthians” song, lyrics and recording	Orthodox Study Bible	Blank paper and pens/pencils for each student. Blank greeting card with envelope for each student.

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Opening Prayer:

Open with prayer. Suggestions include **The Lord's Prayer** or the **Prayer Before Reading Scripture**.

"Illumine our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Your gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Your blessed commandments, that trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto You. For You are the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto You we ascribe glory, together with Your Father, Who is from everlasting, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

Opening Activity: (10 mins)

Mapping Mentors

Students should reflect on different people in their lives who act as guides or leaders, categorizing them based on whether they embody "fatherly" or "boss-like" qualities, and discuss the impact of these relationships.

1. Give each student a piece of paper and a pen/pencil.
2. Instruct students to draw a circle in the center labeled "Me"
3. Ask them to think of 3-5 people in their lives who act as guides, leaders, or mentors (e.g. parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, older siblings, youth leaders, friends, priests, social media figures, etc.)
4. For each person, have them draw a smaller circle around "Me" and write the person's name
5. Next to the person's name, the students should list 2-4 specific actions or qualities that make this person feel more like a "father/mentor" (e.g. listens, encourages, explains, sacrifices for me, etc.) or more like a "boss/controller" (e.g. dictates, criticizes, focuses on rules, self-promoting, etc.).
6. Encourage them to reflect:
 - How do these different types of relationships make you feel?
 - Which ones help you grow in positive ways?
 - Which ones might hinder your growth?
7. Have students share (voluntarily) one insight or a general observation from their "map" with the class, fostering a discussion about healthy vs. unhealthy guidance.

Lesson Instruction: (15 mins)

A. Initial part of the lesson

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.

Imagine you are scrolling through social media and see someone who seems to have it all figured out. They're popular, confident, always in charge, maybe even a "leader" in their group. We often equate leadership with power, control, or simply being the loudest voice in the room. But what if real leadership, especially in our spiritual lives, looks completely different? What if it's not about being the boss, but about being a parent, a guide, a true mentor? In Paul's words, "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 4:6-8.

Have you ever felt the pressure to follow someone just because they project an image of strength or authority, even if their advice doesn't quite sit right with you? Or perhaps you've seen situations where someone in a position of influence acts more like a dictator than a true helper.

Today, we're going to become spiritual detectives, exploring what true spiritual leadership means through the eyes of St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, and how it challenges our modern ideas of who gets to be "in charge".

B. Second part

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 4:14-17.

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In the very fractured city of Corinth, the early Church faced many internal conflicts due to pride and a tendency to treat spiritual teachers like celebrities. St. Paul addressed this disunity by urging the community to shift their focus away from human factions and back towards Christ. He challenged their worldly mindset by distinguishing between an "instructor", who merely imparts information or exercises authority, and a "father," who deeply nurtures, sacrifices for, and guides their children through love and example.

Ultimately, Paul aimed to ground the Corinthians in humility, reminding them that all talents, positions, and gifts are from God rather than earned by personal merit. By emphasizing that every blessing is something received, he dismantled the basis for arrogance and competition, encouraging the community to recognize that their identity is rooted in their relationship with God rather than their affiliation with a specific human leader.

C. Third part

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 4:20-21.

In our faith, a spiritual father acts as a mentor rather than a boss, helping you grow closer to God through love and guidance rather than strict rules. They treat the spiritual life like healing an illness, using their own wisdom and prayer to help you navigate life's challenges and point you always to Christ. As some of our Holy Fathers have reminded us, true spiritual leaders don't force or manipulate; instead, they serve like skilled gardeners, nurturing your spiritual strengths and pruning away what holds you back. Ultimately, this relationship is built on trust and humility, turning your spiritual journey into a shared mission to unite your life to Christ.

You can apply this in your daily life by practicing discernment with the people around you, distinguishing between those who act like bosses and those who act like spiritual parents. While a boss figure may demand control, prioritize their own status, or manipulate situations to serve their agenda, a true mentor (whether a teacher, coach, friend, or family member) invests in your well-being, guides you with patience, and empowers you to grow beyond them.

By asking yourself if these leaders are seeking your genuine good or merely trying to maintain authority, you can better navigate your relationships and ensure that the voices you listen to are those that point you toward Christ rather than toward superficial power.

Closing Activity: (10 mins)

The Letter of Gratitude

1. Ask students to silently think of one person in their life who has acted as a "spiritual parent", someone who has been patient, genuinely invested in their growth, and helped them become a better version of themselves (a parent, a godparent, a priest, a teacher, or a friend).
2. Provide the students with greeting cards. Ask them to write a short note of gratitude to that person. The note shouldn't just say "thank you," but should specifically mention what that person did that made a difference. (Example: I noticed how you helped me ____ without trying to control me, and it made me feel _____.)
3. Try to deliver the cards to the recipients during the week, if possible. Or display them in the classroom.
4. Explain that the best way to honor a spiritual parent is to begin acting like one. Challenge the students to choose one person in their life (a younger sibling, a classmate, or a teammate) and commit to being a "gardener" for them this week, someone who offers encouragement instead of criticism and points them toward their own potential.

To extend this lesson for additional time...

Additional activity ideas:

1. **Discernment and Personal Commitment.** Explain that whenever we make a decision, different voices may compete for our attention. Some voices encourage us to seek what is true and good. Others appeal to our pride, fear, anger, or desire for approval. We pray to the Holy Spirit for discernment in learning to recognize which voices lead us toward Christ.

Invite students to consider the following sentences.

- One voice I need to listen to more carefully is _____.
- One voice or influence I may need to question is _____.

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- One person I can approach for wise, Christ-centered guidance is _____.
- This week, I will practice discernment by _____.

Ask for volunteers to share their answers. Were there any similar answers? Who were the "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" that are trusted to share guidance?

2. *Essential Questions*. Discuss the essential questions from the beginning of the lesson plan.
3. *Review Song*. Review the 12 Lessons of 1 Corinthians song for Lessons 1-3; add Lesson 4.

Background Resources for Teachers:

- Teachers may find General Teaching Strategies and Classroom Considerations included in the back of this packet to be a beneficial resource while preparing for this lesson.
- The Whole Counsel of God ([1 Corinthians 2 and 3](#), [1 Corinthians 3 and 4](#))

