

“A Matter Of The Heart”

1 Corinthians 3:1-23

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Teaching Aim: To see how easily strife can work its way into the local church and cause division when our eyes are off of Jesus. To realize every member in the body of Christ has been gifted by God with spiritual gifts for the benefit of the whole. To understand every Christian should be moving forward on the pathway of spiritual growth; we are not our own, we were bought at an incredible price!

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Dividing the church through spiritual immaturity (vv. 1-4)

1. Does Paul appear to be addressing believers or unbelievers in **verse 1**? What can we learn about these individuals from **verse 1**? What is the meaning of the word “*carnal*” from a Christian perspective? What is a “*babe in Christ*?” Should every Christian be growing spiritually?

2. Paul ministered to the church in Corinth for 18-months. What do we learn about the spiritual maturity of these believers from **verse 2**? Today we can learn a lot about a congregation spiritually from the diet they eat. Why do you think so many of churches today feed their people a steady diet of baby food? Is this kind diet healthy for an adult? Why or why not? (See **Heb. 5:12-6:3**) Why is it important for churches to move beyond the milk (or basic doctrines of the faith) and eat meat?

3. Another way to determine Christian maturity is by the measure of love. The Corinthians were fighting amongst themselves like little children over who their favorite teachers were causing division within the church. According to **verse 3**, what was the outcome of these childish actions? Have you ever experienced this kind of problem in a church that you’ve attended? How did it affect the church?

4. What is the meaning of the word “*sectarianism*?” (See Dictionary) How do we see sectarianism at work in the church at Corinth (**vs. 4**)? Do we still find this problem in modern churches today? If so, in what way? How did Jesus pray for the church on the night before His crucifixion? (See **John 17:20-23**) According to Jesus, why is it so important to maintain unity within the church?

Part II: Everyone will be held accountable for our thoughts and actions (vv. 5-17)

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “*minister*” (**vs. 5**)? (See Dictionary) How is the role of a “*minister*” different from that of the modern corporate CEO? Is it a good thing for modern ministers of the gospel to compare themselves to corporate CEO’s? Why or why not? (**See Matt. 20:26b-28; Mark 9:35**)
2. Paul was fond of using agricultural images in his illustrations. What imagery did Paul use in **verse 6**? How do we see the spiritual gifts of Paul and Apollos at work in **verse 6**? (**See Eph. 4:11-15**) What do you see as your strongest spiritual gifts? (**See Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11**) According to **verse 7**, who should receive the glory when a church increases in size and maturity?
3. How do you see unity at work in **verse 8**? What is the result? God promises the Christian “*degrees of rewards*” in heaven for his or her works done on earth. (**See Matt. 6:19-21**) What are these rewards based upon? Since we know almost everyone agrees that there are degrees of reward in heaven, why do so many people struggle with the notion of degrees of punishment in hell? (**See Rom. 2:5-6; Rev. 20:12**)
4. The Oxford Dictionary of English says a “*metaphor*” is, “*a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable; a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else.*” What two metaphors does Paul use in **verses 9 - 11**? How does each metaphor illustrate the church today? What kind of foundation did the Apostle Paul lay in the building described (**vs. 11**)? (**See 1 Cor. 2:2**) What warning is given to church leaders in **verse 10**? What happens to the church when church leaders stray from this warning?
5. **Verse 12** lists six different kinds of material for building; three will last for eternity and three only temporarily. What do “*gold, silver and precious stones*” represent (**vs. 12**)? How about “*wood, hay and straw*”? How do these materials relate to the heart motivation and doctrinal accuracy of our works? Who will ultimately judge the motivation of our hearts? (**See 2 Cor. 5:10**)

6. What “Day” is referred to in **verse 13**? In what way does “*The Judgment Seat of Christ*” in **2 Cor. 5:10** differ from “*The Great White Throne Judgment*” as found in **Rev. 20:11-15**? On what basis will Christ judge the works of believers (**vs. 13**)? Does this judgment have to do with punishment or with rewards? *NOTE: It is important to realize Christ has already paid the penalty for the believer’s sin in full. (See 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Rom. 5:8-9; 8:1 Psa. 103:11-12)*
7. According to **verse 14**, what is the basis of a believer’s rewards? Under what condition will the believer suffer loss of rewards (**vs. 15**)? What is your motivation for ministering? As you minister, have you remained faithful to God’s Word? Are your works the kind that will endure for all eternity, or will they be burned up on Judgement Day because they were done with the wrong Bible doctrine or motivation?
8. **Verses 16 & 17** are often used to discourage people from committing suicide. What does Scripture teach us about the value of each human being in God’s eyes? (**See Gen. 1:27-28a; Rom. 5:8-9; John 3:16**) How does suicide affect family members, friends, co-workers and fellow students? There are plenty of reasons not to commit suicide, one is that you are loved by more than you think. If you are struggling with suicidal thoughts, please see your pastor, a medical professional, or call the Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255/TALK. In an emergency, dial 911.
9. Although the topic of suicide relates to **verses 16 & 17**, the primary warning in these Scriptures has to do with those who attempt to destroy “*the local church*”. Explain how **verses 16 & 17** relate to false teachers and divisive people in the local church. (**See 1 Cor. 3:10-11**) How did Jesus say we can identify counterfeit teachers today? (See **Matt. 7:15-16a**) What will God do to the person who defiles His temple – the church (**vs. 17**)? Why?

Part III: We can con others, but we can't con God (vv. 18-23)

1. What was Paul referring to when he spoke of “*worldly wisdom?*” The Bible tells us Satan is “*the god of this age.*” What are some ways that you see Satan’s wisdom at work in our country today? (See **2 Cor. 4:3-4**) Is it helping or hurting the country? The Corinthian’s placed a high value on worldly wisdom in the sense of intellectualism, philosophy and rhetoric. What kind of a premium does God place on these things (**vs. 19**)?
2. According to **verse 19**, what will God do to the worldly wise? In **verse 19**, Paul quotes from **Job 5:13** and in **verse 20** from **Psa. 94:11**. How do these verses relate to the false teachers attempting to influence the church in Corinth? How do they relate to false teachers today?
3. According to **verse 21**, who are we not to boast in? Should people be given special favoritism within the church who possess “*greater spiritual gifts?*” Why or why not? (See **Psa. 44:8-9; Rom. 2:11; Jam. 2:1**) God designed the church body to be interdependent upon one another. How do we see this in **1 Cor. 12:12-26**? As Christians, our boasts should not be in men. Who should we be boasting about? (See **1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17**)
4. In light of **verse 22**, what did Paul mean when he told the Corinthians, “*all things are yours*” in **verse 21**? Have you stopped recently and thanked God for the many Christian mentors He brought into your life? How has God used the spiritual gifts of some of these Christians to bless you? What did Paul mean when he said, “*all things are yours?*” (See **Rom. 8:32**)
5. Each believer should understand that our unity with God in Christ is our greatest incentive for unity within the church. According to **Phil. 2:1-4**, what should be the natural outflow of our unity in Christ? Are you a **Phil. 2:1-4** Christian? What do you think the local church would be like if every believer was a **Phil. 2:1-4** Christian?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Every born-again Christian should be on the pathway of spiritual growth!
- Each Christian is uniquely gifted for his or her part in building up of the body of Christ!
- There are no big Christians or little Christians in the body of Christ; each believer has a unique role in the church and is called to serve!
- Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but God who gives the increase deserves the praise and glory!
- God sees through the foolishness of "*worldly wisdom*" and will judge false teachers accordingly!
- If anyone destroys the church; God will destroy that person!
- At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the glorified Christ judges the Christian's works and determines our eternal rewards!