

1 CORINTHIANS 3:1–23, “TO THE CHURCH OF GOD”

¹Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? ⁴For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men?

⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. ¹⁴If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. ¹⁵If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

¹⁶Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

¹⁸Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a “fool” so that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; ²⁰and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” ²¹So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

Discussion Questions (Choose a manageable number to discuss)

1. What about the church in Corinth (vv. 1–4) caused Paul to label its members as childish?
2. Is our congregation immune from the celebrity culture around us? . . . Name some clues. Has the growth of megachurches in our era contributed to this phenomenon?
3. How would thinking of our pastors as farmers (vv. 5–9) provide a corrective influence? The quality of sowing matters; but what is the ultimate source of spiritual life and growth?
4. What (vv. 10–15) does everyone serving in the local church need to be alert to? On what (v. 11) must his or her serving be solidly based?
5. For what (vv. 13–15) will we be called to account on “the Day”? What building materials may prove to have been in the wood-hay-straw category? Pastor Josh Moody singled out *time* as a “costly stone” in the other category. What other materials would fit there? How am I (or could I be) involved in the church as a contributing member?
6. Pastor Josh pointed out that verses 16–17 are not, as is often assumed, about personal morality. Current English fails to differentiate between the singular and plural *you*. To get the thrust of this paragraph as Paul wrote it, read it in Southern colloquial speech: substitute “you all” for each occurrence of “you.” What actions are destructive of God’s temple? How would looking out for each other as loyal teammates build it up?
7. What fresh vision (vv. 21–22) will correct an immature celebrity culture in the church? How would it affect boredom in church? How would it dramatically reduce personal allegiances? . . . Pride in one’s gifts? How can we begin to catch this vision?