

1 Corinthians 3:1-23: God's Building Plan

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1 Corinthians / 1 Corinthians 3:1–23

Introduction

- Building Publix in neighborhood - so SLOW - It's been in the plan for last several years, finally broke ground, no idea when it will be complete. Building takes time - Notre Dame cathedral - One of the most iconic cathedrals in the world. Took long time to build - started in 1163, finished in 1345. Almost 200 years! Let's hope it doesn't take that long to build our childrens/student buildings!
- Building is a slow, tedious process. In [1 Corinthians 3](#), Paul writes about God's greatest building project: the church. God is doing a work in you - building you into the follower of Jesus He has called you to be. God is doing a work in us collectively - building us into the church that He desires us to be. God is doing a work in the church universally - until Christ returns, God will be building His church, drawing people to Himself.
- God has called us to be a part of His building project. We all have the joy of spending your life being a part of God's work. There is nothing more rewarding and fulfilling as being a part of God's work.
- How do you think about the local church? Just a place you gather on Sunday for friendships and inspirational teaching? How do you view your involvement in the local church? Purposeful or you with the church would quit asking you to give your time and money?
- You need the church for your own spiritual growth, and the church needs you.

- This morning, three truths to help you think about your commitment to God and to His church.

We are servants laboring for the master.

- In [1 Corinthians 2](#), Paul called believers mature, but they weren't living in maturity. In [1 Corinthians 3:1-4](#), Paul chides the Corinthians for their lack of spiritual growth.
- Christians that live in immaturity hinder the church from living out its purpose. (See that first hand in churches that are dying.)
- Believers in Corinth have a long history of immaturity. Previously, when Paul was with them, Paul treated them as babies in Christ. They were just learning the things of Jesus and how to walk with Him. Now, years later, not much has changed. The believers should have progressed much in their faith, but they haven't. Like babies, they still need milk - basic instruction. They're not able to take "solid food." Paul has to keep correcting them as a father corrects children rather than moving on to discipleship that's more suited for more mature followers of Jesus.
- The Corinthians are worldly. Instead of acting like Jesus, they act like the world. Envy and strife in the church NOT the fruit of the Spirit. No different than the world!
- They're acting like mere humans instead of transformed people - evidenced in how they think about their spiritual leaders. Mere humans pick sides (think the sophists). Spiritual people see their spiritual leaders for what they are: servants.
- That's not only who your spiritual leaders are, that's who you are. There's one master, and we are all collectively servants of our master.
- Three metaphors in this passage: a field, a building, and a temple.

- vs. 5 - Paul and Apollos. Remember, Apollos favored because his eloquent speaking. Paul spoke simple message of the Gospel - not as eloquent as Apollos.
- vs. 6-7 - Apollos not better than Paul, nor Paul better than Apollos. Each man gifted by God, and each man had a different role. Paul planted the church, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. Ultimately, any growth that took place in the church at Corinth not a result of Paul or Apollos' ability, but the supernatural work of God.
- vs. 8-9 - Paul and Apollos servants on the same team with same goal - not competing against each other over who was the best leader. Same goal, different roles. "For we are coworkers." Paul wants the believers to know that he sees himself and Apollos on the same team.
- Paul's view of himself is view of self we should all have - we are servants. Your spiritual leaders are servants. You are servants. We are servants laboring side by side for the sake of the Gospel, and we have one master.
- If there is one master, here's what you need to remember about your master:
- **The master has put us on the same team.** We are a part of the church working together for our master. We are not competing against each other or against other churches. Mature followers of Jesus all have the same desire: to see God's church grow. You're here to participate with the team, not to simply watch the team from the sidelines. (Church at Corinth entertainment/personality driven - a recipe for disaster.)
- **The master assigns the task.** We're a room full of servants with various gifts and abilities. God has chosen what abilities and gifts to give to us. Paul will say much more about this in [1 Corinthians 12-14](#). BUT... do you now your assignment? Are you living out your assignment?

- **The master gives the growth.** Any success the local church has is because of God. AND... growth is maturity in Christ. Growth is not always numerical. A church can grow numerically and be unhealthy. And, a church can stay small yet be very healthy. A healthy church is a church where the members exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and makes disciples. Numbers aren't the measure of our success. Christlikeness and making disciples is what God is looking for.
- **The master is worthy of praise.** The servants aren't worthy of praise because it's not about them. It's about the master who has sacrificed His life for the servants.

We are builders building on a sure foundation.

- The church is a field - We labor in the field as fellow servants. The church is a building. We are builders building on a foundation, and we won't stop building until Christ returns.
- vs. 10 - As the church planter, Paul laid the foundation in Corinth - Jesus Christ. There is no other foundation. The church not built on wisdom of the age, changing philosophies, trends, personalities, etc. It's built on the truth of the Gospel.
- Paul's warning: be careful how you build on the foundation. If you try to lay a foundation other than Jesus, you're playing with fire.
- When Jesus returns, He will judge the church. Have we been faithful to fulfill His purpose? Have we been careful builders? Have we built with gold, silver, and costly stones? In other words, have we built with what is precious? Or, have we built with what is cheap? Wood, hay, and straw? On the day that Christ returns, if the church has been built with what is cheap, it will be burned up. (Note vs. 15 - God is gracious. Be careful of judging a church and saying their leaders and people aren't saved just because they have gotten off track with the purpose of the church. In the end, their mistakes will be evident, but God's grace will also be evident.

Verses directed towards leaders, but applicable for all of us who join together in the work of the church.) If we build the church with what is precious, we will be rewarded in eternity. Paul doesn't give all the details, but various rewards in eternity based on how we served the Lord.

- **We build with God's blueprint in hand.** (Blueprint for our house in North Augusta.) God has given us the blueprint for how to build His church in His Word. Have we built with what is precious? The Gospel? Have we stayed focused on making disciples? Have we encouraged people to grow in the character of Christ? Have we been faithful to live on the mission of Jesus? Have we been faithful to make disciples who go out into the world? Expect Northwood to be the kind of church that builds by the blueprint.
- It's easy for the church to stray from the blueprint and build on something other than Jesus - for the church to be focused on personal preferences, to be focused on gathering a crowd, to be me-centered rather than God centered. Or, to be focused on personalities of the leaders rather than Jesus. Or, bad theology - prosperity theology, liberal theology, etc. Or, to be focused on consumeristic Christianity, etc. If built on anything other than Christ, it will be revealed.
- **You need to choose to be a part of a church that abides by God's blueprint.** Some who are attending have not chosen to make Northwood your home. Be careful about the kind of church you choose to unite with. Evaluate us. We're not a perfect church, but do you see evidence of our church building with what God considers precious? The church you choose to be a part of will shape how you think about Jesus and how you live for Jesus. Don't choose a church based on how much you like the pastor, the people, the children's ministry, music, etc. Instead, how do you see the church living in accordance with Scripture? How do you see the church living on mission?

We are a temple living for the glory of God.

- **vs. 16-17** - Later, Paul will say that individually you are the temple of God ([1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#)). The Spirit of God resides in each of us who are followers of Jesus. In these verses, Paul reminding us that the Spirit of God dwells among His people.
- When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, the temple in Jerusalem still stood. However, God's presence was not in that magnificent building. God's presence was among His people, the church. God's temple (His people) is sacred. Whoever destroys the temple will be destroyed. The world is in a dangerous place when it tries to destroy God's people.
- **vs. 18-23** - Paul returns to the argument he's been making in these first few chapters. The cross, that has brought us together as the people of God, is the true wisdom of God. Vs. 19 quotes from [Job 5:13](#). God like a hunter - trapped Job. Job had been caught in the trap of depending on his own reasoning/wisdom rather than accepting the wisdom of God. Second quote from [Psalm 94:11](#) which mocks people who think they are safe when they rebel against God. How futile to mock the living God!
- **Vs. 21-23** - The church should not imitate the world by being divided over who their favorite leader was. They shouldn't boast about men, in Christ, everything had been given to them. Christ had given them true wisdom, not Paul or Apollos, or the sophists. Their eyes need to be on Christ.
- **As the temple of God, we point people to Christ's accomplishments, not our own.** A temple is points towards the reality of God. Any success we have as a church is not because of us, but because of Jesus. God is doing a good work in the life of our church. People are growing and being sent out. We're replanting churches. People are trusting Christ and being baptized. It's all because of Jesus. Look at what He has done!

- **As the temple of God, we point people to the purifying work of the Savior.** Everything in the temple pointed to the holiness and purity of God. What about your life? Does it point to the purifying work of the Savior? What about our church? Is it evident that God is doing a purifying work in us? How is Jesus growing you? What is the evidence in your life that you are living as the temple of God? Or, is there more evidence that we're stuck in immaturity and sin? The world needs to see the people of God living as a holy people.
- God is building His church through His people. Do you belong to His people? Have you given your life to Jesus, the One who is the wisdom of God? Have you trusted that Jesus died and rose again for you? Have you surrendered your life to Him?