

1 Corinthians

On Divisions in the Church—1 Corinthians 3:1–23

Open It

1. Why is laying a strong foundation important in building a house?
2. What foundational truths did you learn in school?

1 Corinthians 3:1–23 (ESV)

¹But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,

³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

⁴For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.

⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

⁸He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.

⁹For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.

¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.

¹¹For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—

¹³each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

¹⁶Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

¹⁷If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

¹⁸Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,”

²⁰and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

²¹So let no one boast in men. For 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 Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

Explore It

3. Why did Paul call the Corinthians “mere infants”? (3:1–3)
4. What were the Corinthians like? (3:3–5)
5. What traits did the Corinthians have that made them worldly? (3:3–5)
6. How did Paul want his readers to view both Apollos and himself? Why? (3:5–7)
7. What is each Christian worker’s purpose in ministering to others? (3:8)
8. How is the person who plants like the person who waters? (3:8–9)

9. Who were the “fellow workers” who worked together on the Corinthian “field” or “building”? (3:9)
10. What is the foundation of the church? (3:11)
11. What is like either gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw? How? (3:12–14)
12. What happens to the person who builds in others’ lives? (3:13–15)
13. What important fact had the Corinthians failed to appreciate? (3:16)
14. Why should we abandon the world’s idea of wisdom? (3:19)
15. Why were the Corinthians to stop boasting about the individual leaders they followed? (3:21–23)

Get It

16. How can a person’s efforts in teaching or discipleship be like gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw?
17. What are some implications of the fact that God’s Spirit lives in every Christian?

Apply It

18. In whose life do you want to build God’s Word? How can you start?