

**1 Corinthians 3**

In this chapter Paul reasons with the Christians at Corinth concerning the cause of divisions and foolish actions.

The church at Corinth was weakened by the “carnal” approach many had taken. “Carnal” speaks of putting the desires of our old nature ahead of our new spiritual life. Carnal, earthy, worldly are terms the Bible uses to describe how we used to be. (See Ephesians 4:17-24, 5:8-10). Carnality creeps in subtly, seeming to be wise.

In our last study we looked at the 2 types of wisdom; carnal wisdom and heavenly wisdom as identified in James 3:13-18.

Briefly identify and discuss the characteristics of each:

CARNAL wisdom: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

HEAVENLY wisdom: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**1Corinthians 3:1-4.** What are the two types of Christians that Paul identifies in these verses? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

A carnal Christian places his wants ahead of the ways of God. The catch to carnality is that it disguises itself well. Carnality pretends to be, among other things; wisdom, or discernment, or “deeper knowledge” but it produces *envy, strife and divisions*.

God has a reasonable expectation that those who are “*babes in Christ*” would grow and mature. Consider the words of exhortation from 1Timothy 4:15 “*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.*”(underline added). Notice in this verse the directive to *give yourself entirely*. This simple devotion will promote and produce spiritual maturity that will be evident to all who observe your life.

In your own life what has happened when you have tried to be entirely committed to multiple things? What about when you have given one thing to be the defining priority?

We can clearly see that in the Corinthian church and the church today there is a need for spiritual maturity. First a person must look honestly at himself and see his degree of spiritual maturity. Then before a person can grow it is important that he make room in his life for that growth to take place. This means something has to go, a sacrifice of some measure must be made. Read and discuss Colossians 3:12-17 concerning the keys to spiritual maturity.

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Notice in 1 Corinthians 3 a very important and delicate issue is addressed; carnality in the church. God does not put the people down but rather uses the truth to build them up. He appeals to them as *in Christ* (v1), and closes reminding them they *are Christ’s*(v23). In verses 11-14 we see that we each have a part in the work God is doing and we will each receive an appropriate reward for what He has invited us to do.

With the help of the Holy Spirit what would you like to do different in your life to promote spiritual growth? What sacrifices are you willing to make now?

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*“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”* Philippians 1:27

My memory verse for this week: \_\_\_\_\_

## **1 Corinthians 3 step by Step**

**V1-4** It is evident that the Christians in Corinth had stalled concerning spiritual growth. This was evident by their interaction and attitude.

**V5,6** *ministers*= Servants, messengers, attendants. Each of these men, like each of us, were given invitations (called) to serve and were uniquely equipped to serve. The focus is not to be on the messenger, rather the message.

**V7**- It is important that we see God's design for individual purpose with unity.

**V8**- See also 1Corinthians 15:58

**V9**- Notice in these examples the focus is upon God, not on the servant.

**V10**- Paul understood it was God's unmerited favor that saved him and set him on a new course for life! He took this journey serious and asked others to do likewise.

**V11**- Make sure that everything in your life is built upon this foundation!

**V12-14** God will surely "test" what we do for Him to reveal what our motive and intents were.

**V15**- If we have built our "ministry" on any other foundation it will not stand before Him. Although our 'work' may not pass the test, we are His. Saved here is speaking of the worker who sees that his work was built on the wrong foundation, he is saved but his work is toasted.

**V16**- This is meant to be a reminder; asserting what was already known.

**V17**- I believe this is addressing those who were teachers or followers who built on a false foundation. The words defile and destroy are the same word in Greek and speak of corrupt and diminishing. If a person diminishes the truth, God will

diminish that person, meaning that God will decrease that person because He is protective of His church.

**V18-20** See 1Corinthians 2:1-5

**V21-23** The diversity of the body of Christ is nothing short of amazing! When we focus on Him and see people from His perspective we no longer focus on the messengers but instead the truth of the message!