

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 29TH - 30TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

## MILK FOR INFANTS (1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-4)

Paul is still addressing the 1st issue occurring within this church- division (1:10-4:21).

- “Hero worship” was the main culprit behind their division (1:12), and this was caused by the Corinthians’ lack of maturity (2:6).
- God’s wisdom was what the immature Corinthians lacked, and God’s wisdom is something the “natural man” (unsaved) can’t grasp or understand (2:14).
- **1 Corinthians 2:14-15**
- The problem is that these **believers were not behaving** as spiritual people, but as “people of the flesh,” like little “infants” (vs. 1).

## THEN THERE'S THIS OTHER GUY...

Our “flesh” and old sin nature doesn’t ever want to do what it is right, only wants to live for self, and wants the path of least resistance & greatest **immediate pleasure**.

- This other guy even goes so far as to “wage war against the law of our mind and take us prisoners to the law of sin” (Rom. 7:23) -our **sinful nature is a MASTER** at making excuses and creating justifications for sin and selfish behavior.
- Because these **believers were immature**, they were living under the influence of their flesh.
- Paul had to keep **his teaching to the basics** (“milk”) because they weren’t ready for solid food, even though they had an **inflated view of their own maturity** and spirituality (vs. 2).
- What was the evidence for their immaturity? The fact they were still walking in “**jealousy and strife**” (vs. 3-4).
- Many **Christians stay babies** for far longer than they should because they aren’t willing to say “no” to their flesh and to **worldly practices**.
- Babies are characterized by ignorance, confusion, and dependence, and they need a lot of care.
- Spiritual babies need **personal attention from more mature believers**, care and protection, teaching and modeling, and **accountability to develop new habits**.

## FARMERS IN THE FIELD (1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-9)

Because the Corinthians were **still immature and walking by their flesh**, they were unable to see the spiritual nature of the ministry they benefited from.

- “**What then is Apollos & Paul?**” (vs. 5)- these men didn’t save anyone; they were simply workers serving the Lord with different roles but the same purpose.
- Paul uses a **farming metaphor** to make his point.

## THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY IS OFTEN COMPARED TO FARMING.

The end goal in the work of ministry is always fruitfulness- souls saved (Rom. 1:13), the fruit of the Spirit produced (Gal. 5:22-23), good works (Col. 1:10), or holiness (Rom. 6:22).

- But for fruit to be produced, **consistency and hard work are required** from workers.
- Sowing seed, preparing soil, watering plants, and **harvesting fruit are all different tasks** with the same end in mind.
- Paul & Apollos were on **the same team**, even though they were assigned different tasks (vs. 6).
- But ultimately, it’s not human workers who produce **spiritual growth** in anybody- it’s God.
- Therefore, being **prideful and puffed up about the spiritual leader you follow** completely ignores the reality that God is the one who produced growth in your life- not that pastor or leader (vs. 7).
- We’re all on **the same team** anyway! (vs. 8).
- The fact is we all need planters, waterers, soil preparers and harvesters to work the field.
- We’re working together as God’s “fellow workers” to see **fruitfulness produced in God’s field, the Church** (vs. 9).
- God is the one who sees our **commitment and faithfulness to our assignment**, and He’s the one who **will reward us** according to our labor (vs. 8).

## BUILDERS (1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-15)

Fruitfulness, abundance, growth, and quantity within the Church is God’s will and it’s **what we work for as we labor in the field** (vs. 6-9).

- But God also wants His Church to be built with quality, integrity, and character (vs. 10-15).
- When a church is founded and people come to faith, the “foundation” is Christ (vs. 11).
- Like a skilled master builder, **Paul laid that foundation for this church** (vs. 10).
- If a church’s foundation isn’t Christ, it’s not really a church- **it’s a civic organization, an entertainment venue, or a social club**.
- But this church’s foundation was Christ, and now **other workers were building upon that foundation** (vs. 10).
- Paul cautions this church to be careful with how they built, because **the kind of materials** they used would determine the kind of reward they would get.
- So a church might be built up using **gold, silver, and precious stones**, or it might be built up using wood, hay, and straw (vs. 12).
- What’s he talking about and what’s the difference between **the two types of materials**?
- Gold, silver, and precious stones are timeless, valuable, beautiful, but they’re hard to obtain- **you have to mine them out of the earth** and they’re often unnoticed by many people.
- On the other hand, **wood, hay, and straw are easy to obtain**, common to most buildings, inexpensive, and they’re temporary and passing.
- You can build **massive structures for cheap that are noticed by a lot of people** using wood, hay, and straw.
- But ultimately, those structures won’t last- **fire will disclose their lack of value and quality**, and someday our work will be evaluated through fire.

## WHAT DO THE BUILDING MATERIALS REPRESENT?

Considering the context of **Paul talking about God’s wisdom vs. man’s wisdom**, the building materials seem to be doctrine and the truth of God’s Word.

- They are some doctrines that are **easy to peddle and sell to gain impressive followings**, but in the end, they don’t build sturdy churches or mature Christians.
- But the **timeless, beautiful, and priceless truths of God’s Word** stand the test of time and produce healthy, mature, and faithful disciples.
- There is a **Day of judgment** (evaluation) coming for every believer where God will test the **quality of the work** we’ve done in serving Him (vs. 13-15).
- Some of the work we’ve done that may seem impressive will be revealed as absolutely worthless on that day as it **burns up in the fire** (vs. 15).
- Some will be rewarded, and others will still be saved, but will **discover they’ve wasted their lives** (vs. 15) and **receive no crown to give Jesus for His glory** (Rev. 4:10-11).

## GOD’S TEMPLE (1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-23)

The common Greek term for temple was **hieros**, which referred to the whole temple complex, but the word Paul uses here for **the people of God being the temple** (vs. 16) is Naos, which means “dwelling.”

- The idea is that **the church body is the place of God’s dwelling** - when we gather together as believers **the Holy Spirit reveals His presence and power** in a unique way.
- If the church is that big of a deal to God, then anyone who destroys it through **dissension, rivalry, division, self-promotion, or tribalism** is guilty of **destroying the holy place of God’s dwelling** (vs. 17).
- God will **judge those who destroy** His church!
- When we are **divisive, gossipy, overly critical, or selfish in how we deal with our local church**, we’re defiling God’s temple.
- To any who is **self-deceived about their own maturity** and thinks they know all there is to know about worldly success, prestige, and self-promotion, let them “**unlearn**” the ways of the world so they can learn God’s wisdom (vs. 18).
- Paul is calling for these **Christians to renounce their worldly and fleshly tendencies** and to be willing to be considered a fool by the world.
- Worldliness is **foolishness to God** (vs. 19).
- God has **evaluated the wisdom of the world and our obsession with celebrity, fame, and materialism** and He sees it as vanity and foolishness (vs. 20).
- “**So let no one boast in men**” (vs. 21)- we have to stop the celebrity and hero worship!
- The Church is God’s field, God’s building, and God’s temple - **anybody working in it is just a servant of the Lord!**
- To align or attach ourselves to a hero in order to gain **recognition, financial affluence, or praise is so narrow and near-sighted** (vs. 22-23).
- Why? Because we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s! Therefore, “**all are yours**” (vs. 22).
- We have the **promise ruling and reigning with Christ in a Kingdom** that cannot be shaken for all eternity. Why chase after **such tiny, temporary little visions of affluence and applause?**

## WHAT IS “CHURCH”?

- The Church is never described in Scripture as a **building** or an **institution/organization**.
- It is a living, breathing, active group of people that God describes as His body (1 Cor. 12:27). **Church is about Jesus!** Not us!
- We don’t go to Church...we **ARE** the Church!

## CHURCH AS A FAMILY-MATURITY AS THE GOAL (VS. 1-4)

- Jesus’ commission to the church was to **make disciples** (Matt. 28), and real disciples follow Jesus and grow spiritually.
- The first stage of **spiritual growth** (infancy) requires a lot of care and attention.
- In order to grow in Christ, we must be willing to say “no” to our flesh and to things like **jealousy, strife, and selfishness** (vs. 3).

## CHURCH AS A FIELD-QUANTITY AS THE GOAL (VS. 5-9)

- The end goal in **the work of the church is always fruitfulness** - souls saved (Rom. 1:13), the fruit of the Spirit produced (Gal. 5:22-23), good works (Col. 1:10), or holiness (Rom. 6:22).
- But for that fruit to be produced, **consistency and hard work are required from workers**.
- Some of us will sow seed, prepare soil, water plants, and harvest fruit - these are **all different tasks with the same end in mind**. God gives the growth!

## CHURCH AS A BUILDING-QUALITY AS THE GOAL (VS. 10-15)

- God also wants **His Church to be built with quality, integrity, and character** (vs. 10-15).
- Sound Biblical teaching, solid doctrine, discipleship, and selfless service to each other and **our community will never be sexy or trendy** - but those are the things that will build **sturdy churches and mature Christians**.
- Even if people don’t notice our commitment to those things, **God notices and will reward us**.

## CHURCH AS THE TEMPLE-WORSHIP AS THE GOAL (VS. 16-23)

- As we criticize, slander, and critique even the most unimpressive church for not getting it right according to our standards... God says that church is the place of His dwelling (vs. 16).
- So, destroying the church is destroying God’s temple (vs. 17).
- Therefore, let’s be gracious & life-giving, let’s be humble, let’s keep it about Jesus, and let’s remember the promise of the Kingdom.