

Subject: Built to Last -- Reflections from Sunday's Sermon on 1 Corinthians 3:5-17

Dear Church Family,

It was a joy to gather together this past Sunday and open God's Word as a community with a shared hope in Christ. I encourage you to carry these truths into your week. For related discipleship materials, please click [[HERE](#)].

Summary: The sermon explored Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 and its call for every believer to build their life, their faith, and their participation in the church on the only foundation that holds -- Jesus Christ. Drawing on the image of a football program that prioritized spectacle over substance, we were reminded that what looks impressive from the outside means nothing if it is not rooted in something that lasts. Paul's words to the Corinthians are just as urgent for us today: we are prone to building alongside Christ rather than on Him, allowing our preferences, personalities, politics, and traditions to quietly compete with the One who is our foundation. The sermon also pressed us to consider not only whether we are building on the right foundation ourselves, but whether we are faithfully passing that foundation on to others -- making disciples who make disciples, so that the work of the gospel outlives any single leader or season.

Takeaways:

1. God builds His church, not us. Advertising, programs, popularity, human wisdom, and even our best efforts do not build the church -- God does. Our role is faithful obedience as His bondservants, doing the work He assigns for His glory, trusting Him for the increase.
2. What we build will be tested for quality, not quantity. The materials we use in building our lives and our faith -- whether they reflect Christ or reflect our own wisdom and comfort -- will one day be revealed for what they are. Faithfulness to Christ produces eternal reward; building on lesser things produces only what time and decay will consume.
3. Christ alone is sufficient. The Corinthians were drifting toward human leaders and man-made wisdom, and we are tempted to do the same. Jesus is not simply our Lord -- He is our hope, our peace, our identity, our rest, and our foundation. Every "in Him" promise in Scripture is real and available to us, and nothing we add alongside Him can improve on what He alone provides.

As you go into this week, we encourage you to ask honestly where your heart is being built -- on Christ, or on something constructed next to Him. Few of us abandon the foundation all at once. We drift. We add. We substitute. May we return, again and again, to the only foundation built to last.

With gratitude for the grace that holds us, Pastor Jim

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

Built to Last

I. Introduction: Setting and Building on THE Foundation

II. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9: But (in) God, the Church is One

- Four lessons from God giving the increase include...

Additional Scripture References: 1 Pe 2:5; Acts 2:47; 1 Co 7:22; Ro 1:1; Phil 1:1; Is 6:3; Rev 4:8

III. 1 Corinthians 3:10-17: According to God's Grace

- There is nothing wiser, smarter, better, or more powerful than tending to our faith foundation.
- Does being God's excite you?

Additional Scripture References: Eph 2:19-22; 2 Cor 3:5; Mt 6:19-21

IV. Closing: A Relentless Focus on Christ

- Rarely does one abandon Christ in one step. Rather, we simply build something alongside Him or even in front of Him until that person, tradition, experience, politics, preferences, or some other thing grips our heart in becoming our new foundation.

- Linda
- WOP

These notes are NOT a transcript. The actual sermon may include considerable differences.

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Built to Last

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

I. Introduction: Setting and Building the Foundation

Get out of
the diaper
– Worship
Him

1. Every August, a certain high school football team held exactly one practice before their first game. Just one. *The coach's philosophy was simple: "Practice is boring. Fans don't pay to watch us do drills — they pay to watch us win."*

So they skipped conditioning. *Skipped fundamentals.* Skipped blocking schemes. *Instead, they spent all preseason designing the flashiest end zone celebrations you've ever seen.* Choreographed. *Rehearsed.* One kid even practiced a backflip.

Game night arrived. *The team ran out of the tunnel with fireworks, fog machines, the whole production.* They looked like champions. *Then the ball was snapped.*

They lost 63 to nothing. *Final score.* Their star running back pulled a hamstring on the opening play because nobody had stretched. *The offensive line collapsed like a lawn chair because nobody had learned to block.* And that beautiful backflip celebration? *Never happened.* There was nothing to celebrate.

Afterward, a reporter asked the coach what went wrong. *He said, "I don't get it — we looked like a championship team in the tunnel."*

Here's the part that made it even worse: this coach never trained an assistant. *Never taught a single player how to run a drill, call a play, or coach up a teammate.* He did all the "coaching" himself, from a folding chair, with a megaphone. *So when he eventually retired, the program didn't just have a bad season — it had no one left who knew how to build a team at all. The foundation wasn't just skipped once.* It was never passed on.

That's a double failure, isn't it? **It's not enough to build on the right foundation ourselves** — Christ, the only foundation built to last (1 Cor. 3:11). **We're also called to be coaches who train other coaches, players who develop other players.** Jesus didn't just build His own ministry on solid ground; **He spent three years handing the playbook to twelve guys, so that *they* could hand it to others, who could hand it to others still** (2 Tim. 2:2 — "what you have heard from me... entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also").

A church built on Christ, but full of players who never learn to disciple anyone else is still one bad season away from having nobody left who knows how to play. **The goal was never just a championship team — it was a way that outlives the coach.** Disciples who make disciples who make disciples. **That's not a trick play.** That's the whole game plan — that is being Built to Last.¹

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II. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9: But (in) God, the Church is one

1. The overall sense from these verses includes God is a gift giver. **He offers meaning and purpose.** He has a good, good plan for you and me...one that brings Him glory — which he shares with His disciples. **We all have a role to play.** Not because God needs us, but because He loves us. **And because He loves us, we are invited into His work as living members of His bride, the church.**
2. As we dig a bit deeper, we see the planting and watering in v6 are in the aorist tense, meaning they are past definitive acts without indicating their duration or repetition. **And this is true in our day as well, we are called to sow, water, and tend to the seed of the gospel w/o necessarily seeing it bloom.** Every once in a while we are blessed to see it germinate and take root when someone comes to faith. **Is it not astounding that God offers — actually commands - us to be an active part of His plan of salvation and sanctification?!**

¹ This story was created via several prompts used on the AI platform 'Claude' on or about Sept 1, 2026.

3. Paul then quickly moves toward the mystery of the seed that germinates and brings forth new life. In v6 and 7, he states and repeats for emphasis that God gives the increase...it is God that designed and coded the seed to burst into life. What's more, 'God giving the increase' is in the imperfect tense, pointing to the reality that God remains at work in the lives of those who have been sown and watered.

A. Having placed us in the body of Christ at our salvation, God's 'giving the increase' carries with it FOUR lessons found in this opening section. The first lesson is found elsewhere in Scriptures such as 1 Peter 2:5 and Acts 2:47; specifically, it is God that builds His church. It's not...

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- i. Advertising...God builds His church. Outreach...God builds His church. Events...God builds His church. Popularity...God builds his church. Programs...God builds His church. Entertainment...God builds his church. Human wisdom...God builds His church. Gifts...God builds His church. Finances...God builds His church.
- ii. In great contrast with God, man tends to build the church around what we can see, measure, control, and celebrate. In this we can end up in a place where we do what we want and NOT what Christ commands. Christ builds His church according to His word and wisdom, through His Spirit for His glory.

B. The second lesson is even closer to home. In v7, we read that our roles in God's kingdom (e.g., planter/waterer) do nothing to elevate our importance. In v8, we read that different workers will have different jobs with different gifts WITH some having the same gifts used in different ways (e.g., teaching)...all knit together on team Jesus for fulfilling His will and purpose. Next in v9, Paul notes that all Christ-followers are 'fellow workers'. And while we are not there yet, in v10a, we read that Paul-the-worker was so according to God's grace...emphasizing that

Jesus is at the center of his our spiritual formation journey and His bride, the church.

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Each of these individually and together point to the second lesson (which is also found elsewhere in Scripture, e.g., 1 Co 7:22; Ro 1:1; Phil 1:1)...followers of Christ are “doulos”, meaning bondservants or slaves... a slave is one who belongs to or is under the authority of (in this case) Christ.

- i. That we are God’s slave is not a punishment, but a blessing. For in Christ, the Christian has received the greatest gift possible...Christ Himself. He has knit us together that we work for His glory. What’s more, can you see that after He does the heavy lift, He blesses us with doing work that He actually doesn’t need us to do? And then, as though the gift of Himself is not enough, He rewards us further still. [*As I prepared this sermon, I fell into worship with the songs of both **Isaiah 6:3** and **Revelation 4:8** came to mind with their words of ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts and the Lord God almighty, respectively’.*]

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C. The third lesson of building unity in the body of Christ is found in v8. Paul notes that we are not only individuals in Christ, but we are one with Christ as our head. Indeed, we are His ‘building’ as we read at the end of v9.

- i. This lesson makes clear that we, individually, are the dwelling place of God and that as living stones (1 Pet 2:5), we are joined together as “a habitation of God in the Spirit” (1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:19-22). Both are true and we are to live our lives accordingly.

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D. The fourth lesson is also found in v8 as well in the 2nd part of our passage today. While we are knit into one body, we all receive rewards according to our faithfulness and obedience in doing what He gives us to do. As we are about His business

here on planet earth, we are quite literally laying up treasure in heaven.

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III. 1 Corinthians 3:10-17: According to God's Grace

Get out of
the diaper

According to God's grace what? Well in these verses, we read the grand narrative in our passage, 'according to God's grace', is that He saves AND He builds His church. The foundation for both is Jesus Christ and His word.

1. Paul has returned to the Corinthians wandering ways in these verses...in their wisdom, they are purposing to corrupt that which is incorruptible. More specifically, they are corrupting man's view and relationship of One who is NOT corruptible. Those paying the price for their foolishness are...themselves. Yup, they are leading themselves astray from the Gospel foundation Paul taught them.
2. It is good for us to be reminded that Paul's admonition to take heed in building one's faith foundation on Christ is as much for us today as it was for the Corinthians in Paul's day. In Corinth they were picking leaders seemingly having more charisma, power, or spiritual depth according to their own man-wisdom regarding what fit their views best – in an almost inconceivable sense, they were determining which human leader they would prefer to follow rather than following Jesus.
 - A. Perhaps you have found yourself in the quagmire of too much of anything not-Jesus AND too little of Jesus leading, directing, and shaping your life. We know from our passage today, Scriptures such as **Ephesians 2:19-22**, and from our own witness of the modern day church, this quagmire is a steady drumbeat within fallen humanity...Paul even found himself addressing this yet again with the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3:5: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God."

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- B. Jesus Christ is THE foundation in which (1) our eternal lives are secure (v11), (2) we are being built together, with Him, for His

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purposes and glory (v9), and (3) we are held to account by and for our righteous and holy Lord (v12-15, 2 Cor 5:9-10). No other foundation is sufficient – only the person of Jesus Christ.

C. Jesus all the Corinthians needed. He is all we need. Even more astounding is that He freely gives Himself to us. The One we need says “here I am, receive and abide in me”. He is our Lord, yes. But He is also our hope, our friend, brother, bridegroom, shepherd, and advocate. Jesus is our peace, our rest, and our provider. He is truth, love, forgiveness, and comfort. As children of God, Jesus is ours and we are His.

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i. Does being God’s excite you? // Or are they empty words holding no real meaning or authority in your life? Words you have heard so often that their truth has become white-noise in your life no longer (or maybe never did) captivating you.

3. There are a few other things I want to note before we close:

A. In v10, Paul also makes clear the expectation that Corinthians (and Aikenites) are to build upon the foundation of Christ. In Him, we are made secure and whole as we realize our identity. In Him, we come to know and live truth. In Him, our deepest relational and spiritual needs are met. In Him, we inherit a meaningful, purposeful life. In Him, we overcome death. In Jesus, every promise of God’s becomes ours. This is the life-giving, life-sustaining gospel for which God has made us ambassadors of reconciliation in our time and place.

B. In verses 12-15, we read a descending order of worth and value in the building materials that Paul is presenting. This serves to remind us that if we want to stay close to Christ...if we want all of those “In Him’s” we just considered...we must not allow the ease, comfort, and attraction of the things of lesser value rule and reign in our hearts. Is anything more sorrowful than a Christian fooling themselves by building his/her faith on the things with no Godly value?

C. In verses 13-15, we note the builders work will be tested. It is tested not for quantity, but for quality and purpose (i.e., for whose glory). Faithfully building on the foundation of Christ brings eternal heavenly rewards as Christ is glorified in our trust and obedience. In contrast, building on the foundation of man-wisdom brings forth earthly treasure...Matthew 6:19-21 says it this way:

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- Matthew 6:19–21

And in our passage today, with eyes wide open, we see that God will not dwell with the unholy. So, we are confronted with a series of questions including: Where were the Corinthians treasure and hearts? Where are ours? Are they expectantly on Christ? Are you and I lovingly responsive to His will, and willingly being continually transformed further into His image?

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IV. Closing: A Relentless Focus on Christ

1. Children of God, few of us abandon Christ all at once. We simply begin building something alongside Him—our leader, our experience, our politics, our preferences, our success, our tradition—until what we have built becomes more important than the One who is our foundation. We have put on a spiritual diaper.
2. Yes, God’s word says and our lives testify that pride remains a thing in our life...a warzone always threatening our testimony because it brings the things of our flesh in as gods of our lives. May we reject the flesh in favor of the fruit of the Spirit as we live godliness for Jesus honor and glory.
3. Christ alone is our foundation...a foundation built to last.

5-Day Devotional

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

Built to Last

Day 1: The Only Foundation That Holds

Reading: 1 Co 3:11; Mt 7:24-27

Devotional: Every structure eventually reveals the quality of what it was built upon. The same is true of a life. Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 3:11 that no foundation other than Jesus Christ can bear the weight of an eternal life. Matthew 7 reinforces this with the image of a house standing firm through the storm not because of its size or appearance, but because of what lies beneath it. Ask yourself honestly: what is your life actually resting on? Your reputation, your accomplishments, your theology, your church attendance? These things may look solid in the tunnel, but the game eventually reveals the foundation. Christ alone holds.

What have you been quietly building your sense of security upon besides Christ? Where has your foundation been tested recently, and what did that test reveal? Identify one area of your life where you have been relying on your own wisdom or effort rather than Christ. In prayer ask God to become the foundation of that specific area.

Day 2: Servants, Not Stars

Reading: 1 Co 3:5-9; Ro1:1; Phil 1:1

Devotional: Paul asks a pointed question at the opening of this passage: who are these leaders you are exalting? His answer is disarming. They are servants. Nothing more, nothing less. The word Paul uses elsewhere, and that shapes his entire understanding of Christian identity, is "doulos" — bondservant, one who belongs fully to another. This is not a demotion. For the believer, it is the highest possible calling, because the One we belong to is Christ Himself. God does not need your gifts, your platform, or your influence. He invites you into His work because He loves you. The harvest belongs to Him. The glory belongs to Him. The work is a gift to you.

Are you serving in ways that draw attention to Christ or to yourself? Do you find your identity more in your role in the church or in your belonging to Christ? Perform one act of service today that no one will see or acknowledge. Do it intentionally and offer it to Christ as an act of worship rather than an act of performance.

Day 3: God Builds His Church

Reading: 1 Co 3:6-7; Acts 2:47; 1 Pet 2:4-5

Devotional: The pastor's words carry a sobering rhythm worth sitting with: advertising, outreach, events, popularity, programs, entertainment, human wisdom, gifts, finances — God builds His church. Not one of those things, however good or useful in its proper place, is the builder. God is. The planting and watering Paul describes are real and necessary acts of obedience, but the germination of new life belongs entirely to God. This means the pressure is not on you to manufacture growth. It means the church is

not a product to be marketed. It is a living body, being built by a living God, according to His word, through His Spirit, for His glory alone.

In what ways have you placed the burden of building the church on human strategy rather than divine sovereignty? How does it change your posture in ministry to remember that God gives the increase? Pray specifically for someone in your life who has not yet come to faith. Release the outcome to God. Ask Him to do what only He can do, and ask Him to show you your faithful role in the process.

Day 4: Gold, Silver, and Stubble Reading: 1 Co 3:10-15; Mt 6:19-21; 2 Co 5:9-10

Devotional: Paul describes a day when every believer's work will be tested by fire — not to determine salvation, but to reveal quality. What was built for Christ's glory will endure. What was built for human approval, comfort, or preference will burn. The building materials he lists move in descending order of worth: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble. The question is not how much you built, but what you built with and for whom. Matthew 6 reminds us that earthly treasure is always temporary. The Corinthians were building impressively in the eyes of men and poorly in the eyes of God. The same danger is ours.

When you examine how you spend your time, energy, and resources, what building materials do they most resemble? Are you living in a way that you would be comfortable presenting to Christ at the judgment seat? Take a quiet inventory of your current commitments, habits, and priorities. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one thing you are building with wood, hay, or stubble, and ask Him for the courage and grace to redirect that investment toward what is eternal.

Day 5: Disciples Who Make Disciples Reading: 2 Ti 2:2; Mt 28:18-20; Ep 2:19-22

Devotional: The football coach in the introduction made two fatal errors. He skipped the foundation, and he never trained anyone to carry the work forward. The church faces the same double danger. A generation that knows Christ but never learns to make disciples is one generation away from silence. Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 2:2 is not a suggestion for the particularly gifted — it is the design of the entire program. What you have received, entrust to faithful people who will entrust it to others. Ephesians 2 pictures the church as a building being fitted together, growing, expanding. That growth requires every living stone to know its place and pass on what it has been given.

Who invested in your faith, and have you ever thanked God for them? Who are you currently investing in, and what are you passing on? Identify one person in your life who is younger in faith than you are. Commit to one intentional conversation this week in which you share something of what Christ has done in your life. Begin the process of becoming the kind of disciple who makes disciples, because that is not a trick play — it is the whole game plan.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

Built to Last

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and understand His word as you discuss the sermon.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. God builds His church — not our programs, personalities, or preferences. Every method, resource, and effort we bring is secondary. Christ is the architect. We are workers under His direction, not the other way around.
2. We are bondservants — doulos — belonging fully to Christ. This is not a burden. It is the greatest privilege available to a human being. He does the heavy lifting, invites us into His work, and then rewards us for participating in what He accomplished.
3. The foundation is Christ alone, and everything built on any other foundation will not survive the test. The Corinthians were drifting toward human leaders, human wisdom, and human preferences. The same drift is available to every one of us, in every generation.
4. We are individually the dwelling place of God and collectively His temple. Both realities are true at the same time. Personal faith and corporate unity are not in competition — they are designed to reinforce one another.
5. Disciples are meant to make disciples. A church full of believers who never learn to develop other believers is one generation away from collapse. The goal is a program that outlives the coach.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. The sermon listed a number of things we tend to use to build the church — advertising, programs, entertainment, finances, popularity, and more — and then stated plainly that God builds His church. Where have you personally seen a church or ministry drift toward building around what is visible and measurable rather than around Christ and His Word? What did that drift look like in practice?
2. Paul uses the image of planting and watering to describe the roles believers play in the work of the gospel. He is careful to say that neither the planter nor the

waterer deserves the credit for what grows. How does this image change the way you think about your own role in someone else's spiritual journey? Does it relieve pressure, add pressure, or both?

3. The sermon introduced the concept of "doulos" — bondservant or slave — as the defining identity of a Christ-follower. This is not punishment but privilege. How does that framing sit with you? Is the idea of belonging fully to Christ a comfort, a challenge, or something you are still working through?
4. The sermon noted four precepts from this opening section: God builds His church, believers are bondservants of Christ, we are called to unity in the body, and we each receive rewards according to our faithfulness. Which of these four lands most personally for you right now, and why?
5. The sermon described the Corinthians choosing which human leader to follow based on charisma, perceived spiritual depth, or personal preference — essentially building their faith around a person rather than around Christ. The pastor asked: "Perhaps you have found yourself in the quagmire of too much of anything not-Jesus and too little of Jesus leading, directing, and shaping your life." How would you honestly answer that question for your own life right now?
6. Paul describes building materials ranging from gold and silver to wood, hay, and straw — a descending order of worth and value. The test is not quantity but quality, and specifically, for whose glory the work was done. What does it look like in daily life to do ordinary things — parenting, work, serving, giving — for Christ's glory rather than our own? What makes that genuinely difficult?
7. The sermon referenced Matthew 6:19-21, where Jesus instructs His followers to store up treasure in heaven rather than on earth. In light of 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, how do these two passages speak to one another? What would it look like for your group, to invest more deliberately in what will last?
8. The pastor made this observation about the Corinthians: "In their wisdom, they are purposing to corrupt that which is incorruptible." He then connected it to us by asking where our hearts are — expectantly on Christ, or drifting toward lesser things. Take a moment with this question as a group: What are the specific lesser things that most commonly compete with Christ for the center of your life?
9. The sermon's introduction used the image of a football coach who not only skipped the fundamentals but also never trained anyone else to coach. The point was that a church full of believers who never learn to disciple others is one generation away from having no one left who knows how to play. How seriously does your own life reflect a commitment to developing other believers, not just growing personally?

10. The sermon referenced 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul instructs Timothy to entrust what he has learned to faithful people who will be able to teach others. What would it look like for this group specifically to take that verse seriously — not just as a principle to affirm but as a practice to adopt?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Audit your foundation. Spend 15 minutes this week writing down the things that most consistently shape your decisions, your mood, and your sense of identity. Then ask honestly: is Christ at the center of that list, or has something else moved in?
2. Identify one person you are investing in spiritually. If you cannot name someone, that is important information. Pray this week and ask God to show you one person He is calling you to plant into, water, or walk alongside in their faith.
3. Evaluate what you are building for. Look at your calendar and your finances for the past month. What do they reveal about where your treasure actually is? Ask God to reorient your time and resources toward what will survive the fire.
4. Memorize or meditate on one anchor verse. Consider 1 Corinthians 3:11, which affirms that no other foundation can be laid than the one already laid — Jesus Christ. Carry it with you this week and return to it when you feel the pull toward lesser foundations.
5. Have one honest conversation. Find someone in your life — a spouse, a close friend, a fellow group member — and give them permission to ask you regularly: "Is Christ your foundation right now, or have you been building on something else?" Invite accountability.

Closing Prayer Points:

- Confess the specific ways your group and its individual members have drifted toward lesser foundations.
- Thank God that He does not need us but chooses to include us in His work as an act of love.
- Ask for the humility to build on Christ alone — in personal faith, in relationships, and in the life of the church.
- Pray for one person in each group member's life who needs the gospel planted or watered in them.

Discussion Questions

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

Built to Last

1. The sermon describes a football team that looked like champions in the tunnel but collapsed on the field because they had no real foundation — in what areas of your spiritual life might you be investing more in appearances than in the substance that holds under pressure?
2. Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 3:7 that it is God who gives the increase, not the planter or the waterer — how does this truth reshape the way you measure success or failure in your efforts to share the gospel with others?
3. The sermon identifies four precepts in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, including the reality that God builds His church apart from human programs, popularity, or entertainment — which of the things on that list do you find yourself most tempted to rely on, and why?
4. Being described as a 'doulos' — a bondservant belonging entirely to Christ — is presented not as a punishment but as the greatest blessing imaginable; how does your daily life reflect or contradict that understanding of your identity?
5. The Corinthians were choosing leaders based on charisma and personal preference rather than following Christ — in what subtle ways might modern Christians, or you personally, be making the same mistake?
6. The sermon warns that few people abandon Christ all at once, but instead begin building things alongside Him until those things become more important than He is — what has slowly crept in alongside your foundation that may need to be examined or removed?
7. Paul's image of building materials in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 moves from gold and silver down to wood, hay, and stubble, with the quality of the work tested by fire — what would it look like practically for you to build with materials that survive that kind of testing?
8. The sermon connects the idea of individual disciples to the broader reality of the church as a living building in which God dwells — how does knowing that you are both personally indwelt by God and corporately joined to others as His habitation change the way you view your relationships within the church?

9. The introduction draws a parallel between the coach who never trained anyone else and the danger of a church full of believers who never learn to disciple others — who in your life are you intentionally equipping to pass the faith along to someone else?
10. The pastor asks whether the idea of belonging to God excites you or whether it has become white noise in your life — what would it take for that truth to move from familiar language back into a living, captivating reality that shapes how you spend your time, energy, and treasure?

Dinner Conversation Starters

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

Built to Last

1. Building on the Right Foundation

What are some things people build their lives around besides Jesus—like success, popularity, sports, money, or approval? How can we tell if Jesus is truly our foundation?

2. God Gives the Growth

Paul says one person plants, another waters, but God gives the increase. Where have you seen God working in your life or in someone else's life lately?

3. Everyone Has a Role

In the church and in our family, everyone has a part to play. What gifts or abilities has God given you that you can use to serve others?

4. What Will Last?

Paul talks about building with things that last versus things that will burn up. What are some choices we can make this week that have eternal value?

5. Disciples Who Make Disciples

Jesus trained His followers to help others follow Him too. Who is someone you could encourage, pray for, or help grow closer to Jesus this week?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Corinthians 3:5-17

Built to Last

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Choose What Pleases Jesus, Not Just What Gets Attention:** A child wants to be silly, show off, or copy friends to get laughs, even if it means being unkind or disobeying. Jesus is our foundation, which means we ask, “What would honor Him?” instead of “What will make people notice me?”

Discussion Questions:

- (a) Have you ever done something just because other kids were laughing?
 - (b) What is one way you can choose kindness instead of showing off?
 - (c) How can we remember Jesus when we are playing with friends?
2. **Be a Helper on God’s Team:** In a group game, classroom, church class, or sibling relationship, a child wants to be first, bossy, or the “most important.” Paul reminds us that one person plants, another waters, but God gives the growth. Everyone has a role, and no role is too small when we serve Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What are some ways you can help at home, school, or church?
 - (b) Why is it important that everyone on a team helps?
 - (c) How can you cheer for someone else instead of needing to be first?
3. **Use Screens in a Way That Honors Jesus:** A child watches videos, plays games, or uses a tablet and begins copying rude words, attitudes, or selfish behavior. Even young children can learn that what we watch and listen to affects what we build in our hearts.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What shows, games, or videos help you think about good things?
- (b) Have you ever copied something from a screen that was not kind or wise?
- (c) What should we do if something on a screen makes us feel scared, angry, or tempted to disobey?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Don’t Build Your Identity on Popularity:** A child feels pressure to fit in with a friend group, wear certain things, like certain content, or act a certain way to be accepted. The sermon reminds us that Jesus alone is the foundation. Popularity, approval, and image cannot hold the weight of our identity.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) Where do kids your age feel pressure to “fit in”?
- (b) How can popularity become something people build their life around?

- (c) What does it mean to remember, “I belong to Jesus,” when others exclude or judge me?
- 2. **Be a Builder, Not a Divider**: A group of friends starts gossiping, picking sides, or leaving someone out. Paul taught that the church is one in Christ. God’s people should build unity, not division.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What are some ways kids divide into groups or make others feel left out?
 - (b) How could you “water” kindness in a friendship instead of adding drama?
 - (c) What could you say or do if your friends are gossiping about someone?
- 3. **Think Before You Post, Text, or Share**: A child is texting friends, commenting in a game chat, sharing memes, or reacting to posts. Paul says our work will be tested. Our words—spoken or digital—can either build with lasting value or burn up because they were careless, selfish, or hurtful.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) Why can digital words still hurt, even if you are not face-to-face?
- (b) Before sending a message, what questions should we ask? Example: “Is it true? Is it kind? Does it honor Jesus?”
- (c) Have you ever seen someone use a group chat to tear others down? What could you do differently?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

- 1. **Examine What You Are Really Building On**: A student begins shaping their identity around grades, athletics, appearance, followers, dating, humor, politics, or being “the smart one” or “the popular one.” The sermon warned that we may not abandon Christ all at once—we often start building something alongside Him until it becomes more important than Him.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What are common “foundations” students your age build their identity on?
 - (b) How can something good—sports, grades, friendships, talents—become too important?
 - (c) What would it look like this week to put Jesus first in one specific area?
- 2. **Practice Faithfulness Over Image**: In social groups or online spaces, teens may feel pressure to curate an image, exaggerate, perform, or chase approval. The football illustration showed the danger of looking impressive but lacking a real foundation. God cares about what is true, faithful, and lasting—not just what looks good.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) Where do you feel pressure to look impressive?
- (b) How is online image different from real character?
- (c) What is one private act of obedience that matters more than public recognition?

3. Use Digital Spaces as a Place to Build, Not Burn: Teens encounter sarcasm, gossip, crude humor, comparison, inappropriate content, arguments, or pressure to respond instantly. Paul describes a coming test of our work. Digital habits are part of what we are building. Some online choices strengthen faith and relationships; others weaken them.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What kinds of online habits build “wood, hay, and straw” instead of lasting treasure?
- (b) How can you tell when a digital space is shaping your heart in an unhealthy way?
- (c) What boundaries would help you use your phone or device in a Christ-honoring way?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it’s okay to ask questions, even if things don’t make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z
1 Corinthians 3:5-17
Built to Last

1. Build Your Identity on Christ, Not Your Image

Bible Reference:

- (a) 1 Corinthians 3:11 — “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- (b) Galatians 1:10 — “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men?”

Application: Your identity cannot be strong enough if it is built on followers, appearance, achievements, relationship status, humor, athletic ability, intelligence, or social approval. Those things can change quickly. Christ does not. Gen Z faces constant pressure to perform, post, compare, and brand themselves. But the sermon reminds us that only Jesus is a foundation “built to last.”

Scenario: You are in a friend group where everyone seems to be carefully managing their image—what they wear, what they post, who they are seen with, what trends they follow. You start feeling like you have to become someone else to stay accepted.

Discussion: Where are you most tempted to build your identity apart from Jesus—online image, friendships, success, appearance, dating, humor, or something else?

2. Choose Faithfulness Over Popularity

Bible Reference:

- (a) 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 — “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.”
- (b) Colossians 3:23 — “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”

Application: God does not call you to be impressive; He calls you to be faithful. You may not always see immediate results when you obey Christ, encourage someone, share your faith, or choose integrity. But planting and watering matter because God is the One who gives growth.

Scenario: You try to stand for what is right in a group chat, classroom, sports team, or social circle, but nobody seems to care. Maybe they ignore you, mock you, or move on like your choice did not matter.

Discussion: What is one area where you need to obey God even if no one claps, notices, or agrees?

3. Don't Let Group Pressure Become Your Foundation

Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 3:4 — “For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?”

Proverbs 13:20 — “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.”

Application: The Corinthians were dividing themselves around human leaders and preferences. Today, people often divide around friend groups, influencers, politics, music, trends, fandoms, personalities, or online communities. Christ must have more authority over you than your group does.

Scenario: Your friend group starts making fun of someone, pressuring people to take sides, or deciding who is “in” and who is “out.” You know it is wrong, but you also do not want to lose your place in the group.

Discussion: How can you tell when a friend group is shaping you more than Jesus is?

4. Build Unity Instead of Feeding Drama

Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 3:8-9 — “Now he who plants and he who waters are one... For we are God’s fellow workers.”

Ephesians 4:29 — “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification.”

Application: Followers of Jesus are called to build up, not tear down. In group settings, you can either add to the drama or bring peace. Unity does not mean pretending sin is okay, but it does mean refusing gossip, unnecessary conflict, pride, and cliques.

Scenario: A group chat turns into a place where people vent, gossip, screenshot private messages, or make sarcastic comments about someone who is not there.

Discussion: What would it look like to be a “builder” in your group chats, lunch table, team, or friend group this week?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.